

PERFECT 10 LINERS

(ENGINEER CUTE BOY/ANGEL GEAR CODE):

HOTTIE AND CUTIE (ARC AND ARM STORY)

Volume I and II

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(this was a lot of work so please follow us)

(not completely proof-read, working on it)

PLEASE READ!

Hello, this is julia aka @gunchersaran. I bought the translation of the book on MEB and copied it into this file, but I did not translate it. I copied it for those who can't afford to buy it. If you can afford to buy the book, please do so, it will help with the popularity of the series! Since I'm from LATAM, I know how expensive it is for some of us to buy it, thankfully I'm lucky enough to be able to afford it, so I decided to make this copy for those who can't afford it or those whose country doesn't have access to buy it on MEB.

Some friends helped me out with this, the collaborators! Follow them if you want and follow me too if you want (you don't have to, only if you want to), especially on tiktok (rant: I'm flopping hard there no matter how many edits I post, haha... username is aiooncher). On tiktok,

I follow everyone who interacts with me and has a forcebook related profile picture! On twitter I follow everyone who has a bl/gl account.

There are a lot of grammar mistakes and confusing dialogues in this book translation since they translated it so fast. I tried my best to make it make sense but since I didn't want to risk any changes in the original story, I changed mostly grammar mistakes.

The reason I posted this on google docs instead of straight into a pdf file is that there are less chances of the file getting taken down, but if it is taken down, I have copies of the file so I can provide you guys with other links or turn it into a pdf file and give other links to download the pdf file, just message me at @gunchersaran if there are any problems with the link.

Please don't share the link with other people. In case it gets taken down, the link I sent you won't work, you'll have to message me for a new one, and if you want the link for others, don't just send them the link, please tell them to message me at @gunchersaran on tiktok or twitter.

Another reason I made this on google docs is that if there are any mistakes or things that need to be changed, me and the collaborators can do that, you can let me know if you see any mistakes and we can update things whenever we need to. but if you prefer the file in pdf, you can download it here on google docs on FILE >> DOWNLOAD >> PDF

I wanted to give you a little spoiler that isn't really a spoiler : there are a LOT football/soccer references on this book, so be prepared if you don't like football, I hate football so it was a pain in the ass for me, but the book is funny and cute and very entertaining

Anyway, I hope you guys enjoy it! Please support perfect ten liners and forcebook ♥

INTRODUCTION

"What's your name?"

The question is instantly thrown at me as soon as I get seated.

This person is a female senior. She's not alone, tagged along by a man carrying a giant camera. I assume they're filming the footage of freshmen.

"Ah... I'm Arm."

"What's your major?"

"Electrical engineering."

“Can we take some photos of you? We will post them on the engineer cute boy page to hype it up.” She says, smiling. I get so shy that I might demonstrate some hip thrusts.

“Is that okay, phi?”

“Of course. You are so cute, Arm. You’ll get tons of likes and shares.”

It’s not like I want to... but I’ve smoothened my shirt. Hehehehehehe.

After a moment of vanity, I allow the seniors to direct my poses and get my shots photographed multiple times. They excuse themselves to move on to the others as my name is announced.

“Next. Mister Anon Phuwakomon, please enter the interview room.”

I rise and tidy my slightly wrinkled high school uniform. With my portfolio over my chest, I take a deep breath and walk with my back straight into the room with two professors. They look young, presumably graduating abroad, absolutely passionate.

“Why did you choose engineering?” The first question comes out suddenly.

“I... would like to gain more experience in what I love. I’d like to catch my dream since it’s the meaning of my whole life.”

“Is that a script?”

“Ah...”

They’re so onto me, these doc...tors.

My name is Arm, Anon Phuwakomon, born on a Wednesday night, graduating from an all-boy school with a GPA of 3.89. I neither enrolled in engineering for experience nor was this my childhood dream. Back when I was a kid, I wanted to become an ultraman and wished to

apply for the mass communication department after graduating high school. My father didn't approve.

Father said I have no talent in this field. Be it social media, films or television. I admitted I was incompetent, but I hoped to try. It was my dream!

My father didn't understand his teenage son.

Anyway, since I was such a good boy, I applied for engineering as he wished.

My father is an engineer and my mother is a nurse. When I was in the tenth grade, they strongly expected me to follow in either of their footsteps. Ah... do you get it? I wouldn't study nursing with my mother as a role model. There's nothing wrong with being a nurse, but I can never treat others when I can barely take care of myself.

I've given up at this point and dismissed the pain. It'll be over in four years. When that time comes, I'll rethink my life choices.

"What's your favorite subject?" A question from one of the professors snaps me out of my memory lane.

"Math. And physics."

"Which part do you like about physics?"

"Electricity." My father wrote me a script. I must select electricity to study electrical engineering.

"Can you solve this problem for us?" A professor draws a picture on a piece of paper with a short description with a pencil and hands it over.

Shit! Dad, help me...

The problem makes my groin sweat. Who said the interview would be easy? Why do I have to solve a problem in front of these professors?

“Ah... well...” It’s too fucking hard. Can I forward it to the late Einstein to solve it? Are they selecting students in or out?

“Is it difficult?” Asks the older man.

I look up and meet his eyes. “Yes. Could I bring it back as homework?”

Laughter reverberates across the room. Ughhhh, is it so satisfying that a kid can’t solve a problem? Once I go home, I’ll ask my father to report them to the dean for hurting my feelings!

“It’s alright. This problem is for grad students. I gave it to you just in case you could solve it.”

Why would I be able to solve thaaaaat? I’m not the winner of the Physics Olympiad.

“Relax. We’re not getting academic here. Present yourself as to why we should accept you into this department.”

“I participated in various activities in high school. A student election, for example.” I set my portfolio on the table for them to fully appreciate.

“Did you win?” Asks one of the professors immediately.

“No.”

“What else?”

“I led prayers during the morning assemblies. I gave the seventh graders a tour of the agricultural plot in our school. I was also the president of the darts club in high school. These are only some of them.” Look at their faces. They must be impressed. I’m so proud of myself.

“Those have nothing to do with engineering.” One of them mumbles.

I quickly add “I love changing light bulbs at home. I excel at that.”

“Students from other departments can do it as well.”

“But if I study engineering, I’ll be better at doing it and even able to change light bulbs for other houses.” Think before you speak, Arm. Why the fuck are you in a rush?

“Okay, I feel your determination.” says a professor with a smile then continues “What does Anon mean?”

Wow, I fucking hate it when people ask the meaning of my name. For as long as I remember, my relatives, teachers, best friends, social security officers, and more, always asked what my name means.

AND...I’M...SICK...OF...ANSWERING!

I wish to change my name a million times a day, but my dad would be sad. He wants me to be rich, so the meaning of my name is...

“A person with no debt.”

“Really?” Is it hard to believe?

“Yes.”

“Who gave you that name? A monk?”

“An abbot.” The highest rank.

“Well, Anon with No Debt, welcome to the engineering department.”

“Huh? I passed?”

“If there was an elimination, you’d be the first to get eliminated. We don’t do that.” What a vote of confidence.

“I’m glad the system doesn’t exist here. Thank you again.”

From now on, I’m a student in this department. I’ll be in your care for four years. Nice to meet you, the engineering (freaking) department. Don’t forget me. I am... Anon with No Debt.

Chapter 1

The Youngest, the Oldest, the Jeer

It’s peer mentor selection day. The seniors claimed it was extremely important since we’d be helping each other out for four years until graduation. I woke up early, showered, dressed up, and kept my stomach empty because they said our peer mentors would treat us to a meal. It’s almost eleven and it’s not my turn, though.

“Sakonchai, your peer mentor gear code is 0128.”

“Yeah!!”

“Praeploy, your peer mentor gear code is 0036.”

“Kyaaaaaaaaa, that’s the second-year engineering prince. Damn, I’m jealous!”

“Kungfu, I love you!”

Wow, the students there are screaming so loud, they might be admitted to the hospital soon. I don’t understand why they accepted nearly four hundred freshmen. I wouldn’t have been this stressed had I not been forced to study here. What’s with the gear code? I’m afraid I’ll get someone weird. I hope someone nice steps into my life. I’ll be happy that way.

I've been to an all-boy high school for six years. What a fucked up life. My heart withered from the lack of gentleness.

"Arm, which one do you want as your peer mentor?" Asks someone behind me, resting his chin on my shoulder.

"I don't know. What about you?"

"I like that one. The cute girl with a hair bun on the right." He points at his target.

This motherfucker is Sand, my first friend in university, plus my roommate. Sand is pretty popular in this department. He was a child star, starring in old dramas with famous actors when he was five to six years old. His mother stopped sending him to auditions once he grew older, so he got to enjoy his childhood as he'd yearned for and never returned to acting.

"That's your type? I thought you preferred smoking hot girls." I tease.

"I've seen lots of pretty girls in the industry. Kind of sick of it."

"How handsome of you to say that."

"You know Chompoo Araya?"

I nod in excitement. "Did you play a drama with her?"

"No. I was curious."

Ugh, he's driving me up the wall. This is only Sand. Another best friend of mine lives next door and studies in the same department. His name is Pipo. His name sounds delicious already, doesn't it? His appearance contradicts his name, regardless.

Pipo has these barbarous looks. His goal was to grow a beard to look cool like the seniors, but the sophomore commanded him to shave it off the moment he set foot in the

department. His dream was crushed in a matter of seconds. That's not the point here because the most annoying thing about him is his claw machine obsession.

I don't know what the fuck is wrong with this dude. He would blabber about claw machines whenever we hung out. From the steps, the benefits, the factories, to some nonsensical secret group of allies.

Together, we're basically 'it' boys of the engineering department. Disasters ensue wherever we go.

"Next line," announces a senior.

Oh! It's my line! I stand up and follow this one student in front of me. There are ten students per line for the speedy drawing of lots. The reason Mr. Anon is at the head of the line is... I'm small. I'm around 165cm. 166cm to be precise. Is Sand, trailing behind me, the same height? No! He's over 180cm tall! There are only two male electrical engineering freshmen under 180cm tall. I regret not eating healthily when I was a kid.

Never mind that. It's my turn to draw a lot.

"Go ahead, Arm."

Ooooh, how exciting. As if. I pick one without thinking much and pass the tiny roll of white paper to the senior with two ponytails.

"Anon, your peer mentor gear code is 0498."

"Whooooooooooooa," holler the sophomores across the hall. The freshmen turn their heads back and forth, looking for my peer mentor, until a fucking gorgeous girl gets up from a line with a marigold garland. Erm... I hate the smell of marigolds.

"How lucky. Your peer mentor is the second-year princess."

“The princess?”

For real!? Wow, should I be excited? I mean, everyone is in awe on my behalf. I, not knowing what to do, watch the delicate figure, around 164cm tall march in front of the lines. She puts the marigold garland on me and a sash that says ‘The Angel Gear Code.’

“I’m Yeepoon, an environmental engineering student.”

“Oh, I...I’m Arm, studying electrical engineering.”

“I’m glad. Let’s meet up after the activity.”

“Sure.” I nod, my heart shaking. She’s fucking pretty up close. What kind of good deed did I commit in the past life to enviably get this five-star as my peer mentor? My father’s face pops up in my mind. I love engineering, dad.

We exchange a few words before a senior guides me back to my line and resumes the drawing of lots.

We’re finally free at noon. Sand leaves and Pipo says bye, while I, unable to leave, wait for my gorgeous peer mentor with my hands clasped politely over my groin. She soon shows up with heaps of gifts. Files, notebooks, pencils, a folded table, a laundry basket, clothes pins, and a feather duster.

Mom, am I studying to be an engineer or a housekeeper?

“These are my welcome gifts for you. Freshmen stay at the dormitory, don’t they?”

“Yeah. Thank you.”

“Your fourth year peer mentor also left some gifts. Here you go.” I receive multiple bars of soap for socks besides other necessities. Yeepoon reaches deeper into her bag. More?

“This is from the third-year peer mentor.” I accept that object.

“What is this, P’Yeepoon?”

“Oh, grout.”

What? Are you kidding me? Am I going to mix it with some drink while studying? You damn third-year bastard, are you messing with me?

Yeepoon continues shortly after my quiet cursing. “Let’s put these in the trunk and have a meal. My treat.” Of course. I’ve been waiting with hunger chewing my stomach. I wouldn’t run back to the dorm to get more sleep.

This is normal. I’ve never experienced being a freshman. Forget the icebreaking activity, cheering, and name-hunting. I’m considering skipping it all. Yeepoon says engineering students are quite tough. I wonder if I’ll graduate to be an engineer. It’s not like I’ll apply to be in a commando. What’s the need to be so tough?

“What’s your favorite food?”

“I eat everything.”

“We’re having a big meal with all our peer mentors next week, including the third-year and fourth year seniors. I’ll tell you the time and date later.”

“Okay.” One peer mentor isn’t enough. I have to meet the third-year and fourth year peer mentors as well. Yeepoon says our gear code lacks feminine energy to the point of criticality since she’s the only girl.

“And why do they call us the Angel Gear Code?”

“Oh, we’re good looking.” Whoa... would I ruin the image if I happened to be ugly? Well, I’m indeed striking. It sounds awful, on another note, like you worship beauty privilege or something.

“Are they good looking?”

“The fourth-year peer mentor is the campus prince and the third-year one is the Superior Prince.”

“What’s Superior Prince?”

“He’s a soccer player.”

“Huh?”

“A soccer player more handsome than the campus prince.” She wiggles her eyebrows. Aw... I want to see if the third-year peer mentor is as fucking stunning as described.

“Have you checked the Engineer Cute Boy page?”

“Roughly, yeah.” What’s with her?

“Check it out if you want to see the fourth year peer mentor. His name is Jet. Also, I’m the admin.”

“Huh!?”

“Yeah. Nobody knows. I promised myself to appoint my peer mentee as the second admin so we could manage the page with a hundred thousand followers together.” Yeepoon grins. Won’t she ask if I wish to be her minion?

Ugghhhhh, who says being part of this gear code is like winning the lottery? What the hell? She’s going to make me manage that ridiculous page of engineer boys. I know nothing

about anyone in the department and my nosiness is weaker than others. The easiest thing I can do is post my photos to promote myself.

“When I had the interview two weeks ago, I met someone who ran the page. How many admins are there?”

“Oh, Jib? She’s taking care of the university page now. I’m on my own.”

“I see.”

“Your photo on the page is cute. You got lots of likes for that one with your school uniform.”

“Aw, I’m flattered.”

“It’s not like that. I advertised it.”

What the heck!?

“I don’t think it’s a good idea for me to be an admin.”

“It is. If someone suggests any hot boys, you just have to post their photos with captions.”

“But I think...”

“Oh, except this guy. You can’t post any photos of him...”

“Hey, Yeepoon, who are you eating with?”

Ah...do you understand the feeling of being interrupted at perfect timing?

It's going to take forever. The dude is having a whole conversation with her for so long that we barely talk. Yeepoon spends the little meal time we have chatting with a flirty guy. I... used to be like that.

In the end, Anon with No Debt has received a mission to restore the honor of engineering boys by, in my confusion, becoming another admin of the page with a hundred thousand followers.

Engineer Cute Boy

I turn on my beloved MacBook, tap on the table a few times, and drink green tea with the other hand at a café. I braced myself for some time before clicking accept to be the second admin a few days ago. Yeepoon left the page inactive for almost a week.

She's crazy in love with her boyfriend. I've recently learned that her boyfriend is the fourth year peer mentor. Ugh. Jet is fucking handsome, as expected from the campus prince. I was stunned for thirty five seconds when I first saw his photo and got insanely jealous when I met him in person. How the fuck can he be unbelievably good looking? Plus, he's nice. With us side by side, I thought I was Pororo and realized I should banish myself from the Angel Gear Code.

Jet's out of this world beauty leads to Jib constantly promoting him on her page. We post popular boys regularly and advertise the less popular ones. I was one of them. That legendary school uniform photo, I swear no one can ever post my photos again as long as I'm admin.

PING!

I click the notifications on my account. It displays typical activities on the timeline but there's a message box with an orange flag, indicating it comes from the cute boy page I'm running.

'Admin, can you post Arc's photo? You never posted him. He's the most handsome man in the whole world.'

She sends a photo. My heart suddenly drums like a rock band. How long has it been since I felt this way? My hands are shaking. I have difficulty moving my limbs.

Low Battery

Fuuuuuuuuck! Perfect freaking timing.

I fetch the charger from my bag and plug it in. By the time I've pulled myself back together, the girl with the super cute profile picture is gone, leaving only his photos and rough information. Great. I don't have to look him up.

His nickname is Arc. His name is Anol. Whooooooooooa, he has the same name as mine if not for the last letter. Mine is 'N' while his is 'L' He's a third-year civil engineering student. And the photo the girl has sent...

I'm speechless for a moment. I scroll down to read her message and scroll up to look at the photo over and over in my puzzlement. The photo of Arc, a third-year boy, makes my hands cold, and I stay rigid for around ten minutes in that café.

How the fuck is he real? There are dozens of attractive people in the university, but he stands out. I've been studying these hot boys on the cute boy page for days, yet I never stumbled across him on the wanted list. I wonder how this guy slipped out of Yeepoon's radar.

All right, then. My job is to promote this dude for all students to see. He should thank me for being my first post.

Engineer Cute Boy

Manly boys play soccer.

Arc, third-year, civil engineering #SharingHandsomeSoccerPlayers // Admin A

The photo the girl sent me shows Arc in an Inter Milan shirt sitting at the side of the soccer field. Someone photographed him like a model. There's not much except...

PING!

'Arcccccccccc!! Wahh, so handsome. Waaaaah...'

Soooooooooooo fast. The first comment pops up in a few seconds with almost forty likes. What!? It's been a few seconds. Is he this popular? I'm nervous and my heart trembles. My Facebook notifications have never been this crazy. My life is changing with a question... If everyone knows him, why was his photo never posted on this page?

'Freaking handsome.'

'I've admired him since first year. Still do.'

'I want to be a ball to be kicked by you.'

'What's his IG account? He set his Facebook private. Please leave it here.'

'IG: arc_anol go check his fucking hotness. The problem is: will you have a chance?'

Getting nosy, I check his instagram account immediately. I wasn't usually like this. The campus prince, Jet, stunned me for a bit, but this Arc dude brought out the nosiest part of me.

Oh, jeez. This guy is a nobody.

He has exactly 220 followers, much fewer than me. It makes sense when I realize his account is private and he seems selective of followers. I try sending a request, though I'm sure he won't accept it.

PING!

A message. I stop scrolling and go back to the timeline. It's not a direct message from a viewer this time, but...

Anol Praminphisan

Please delete my photo on your page. I don't allow it.

My entire face goes numb. My hands shake upon his demand to delete his photo. Shouldn't you be happy when someone shares and posts your photo on a public page to show off your charming face? You can just ignore it if you're not happy about it. What's with him fuming like this?

Engineer Cute Boy

Why don't you allow it?

I just posted your photo. There's nothing wrong with that.

I wonder what Yeepoon would do. Would she delete the photo right away? I decided to ask for his reason first. Why is he so serious about it? No one cusses him out. They're all praising his fucking extraordinary beauty. Perhaps he's not a fan of the word 'fucking' in the comments?

Anol Paraminphisan

You should understand that I value my privacy.

I don't want anyone to share or criticize any of my photos

Engineer Cute Boy

Okay. I'll delete it.

Anol Paraminphisan

Now!

Engineer Cute Boy

I said I'd do it! Why are you rushing me?

I'm mad. His short reply infuriates me. I was going to delete it. Now I'm annoyed and want to keep the post up like that to mess with him.

Anol Paraminphisan

Do it now. I'll keep watch. Do it before the shares increase any more than this.

Engineer Cute Boy

Okay, okay

But someone messages me privately first. I divert my attention to this person, which is Yeepoon. She scolds me that I must not post that third-year guy. He's an exception. It's the whole thing. I make up excuses, pick my nose, bite my nails, and the inbox of the fan page keeps chiming without me reading any. Once I've talked it out with Yeepoon, I return to the page to delete the photo, which now has nearly 7,400 likes, countless comments and 4,227 shares.

I open the inbox to inform Arc I've deleted the photo but his messages leave me speechless for a minute. Anger spreads all over me. I swear, I'll hate this senior until the day I die.

Anol Paraminphisan

Did you delete it?

You won't delete it?

Answer me.

You have 2 minutes. If you don't delete it...

Hey!

middle finger photo

middle finger photo

middle finger photo

middle finger photo

He's flipping me off like crazy. If you're this hot tempered, I'll never post your photo ever again. Does he think he can do anything because he's handsome? All right! Suit yourself. Arc Anol is permanently blacklisted from the cute boy page!

Unwilling to be an admin anymore, I tell my peer mentor straightforwardly. Yeepoon heaves several sighs. I assume I'll be freed from this burden but no. She says I can take some time off and continue my duty next month. Ugghhhhhgh!!

A week has passed. The sophomores welcomed us pretty roughly on the first two days. What about the third day? Hmph! I skipped it, refusing to participate. Any problems? What did I do when I cut the cheering activity? I ate out, watched movies and played games at the dormitory. Some days I hung out with the students who skipped all those activities together. What a blissful experience to challenge our seniors.

Today is important, given they requested all of us to be present. I follow my two besties to the activity hall and sit quietly.

“Do you know what this important day is?” says the host into the microphone on the stage.

“Noooooooo.”

“I’ll tell you now. Many good looking seniors are here today because we’re selecting participants for the department’s prince and princess contest.”

“Wooooohoooo, amazingggggg,” The freshmen whoop and holler. I also get excited. If I find someone of my type that I’ve somehow missed, I’ll add them to my list.

“There’ll be a selection. Each major will send the best-looking students. Five boys and five girls for the first round selection.”

With that, everyone looks around for the right people while the seniors stroll into the rows to find participants themselves. Since freshmen have name tags, they can easily be called out.

“You go, Sand.” I whisper to my best friend.

“You go. This is not my thing.”

“You were an actor.”

“I was. You go, Po. This stage will highlight your talents.” Sand gestures to the guy behind us.

“If the reward was a one month free card for claw machines, I’d gladly do it.” Pipo mutters. We stay quiet and watch the enthusiastic crowd in resignation until someone taps my shoulder. Shit! A senior!

“Arm, stand up.”

“You’re not sending me, right? It’s not my thing.”

“Give it a try. Go to the front. Hey, come get them.” Sand and I are dragged out to the front with our hands politely clasped over our groins without a choice.

For the record, they will select ten boys and ten girls to be photographed to promote the contest of the department. I don’t have high expectations. In the first round, you will introduce yourself and show your talents. The host will call you onto the stage to perform while others think of the ideas to present themselves.

“What will you do?” asks Sand. A civil engineering student hops up with an acoustic guitar.

“I’ll sing.” I reply.

“What song?”

“*Fortune cookie*. Cherprang is my bias.”

“Idiot...” Huh!!? I’m serious. The song has like 125 million views on YouTube. Ten million of them are from me. I watch it and daydream about it every day.

I’ve prepared myself for some time until the host calls the first electrical engineering student, me, obviously. We’re in line according to our heights. I take a deep breath. In and out. May Cherprang be with me.

“The next person to perform is Arm Anon from electrical engineering!”

THUD!!

“Whooooooooooooooooa!”

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!”

The scream resounds. Not because of my exceptional beauty. Not because of my smoking hot looks as many may expect. There’s an unforgivable technical mistake.

I... tripped...

“Somebody take Arm to the nurse’s office. He fell off the stage.”

“ ... ”

“Arm fell off the stage.”

“ ... ”

“Arm fell off the stage!”

Dear Cherprang...

I’m sorry I can’t perform your Fortune Cookie for my friends. Right now...allow me to curl in the stretcher. This is humiliating. I’m confident that no one in the department is as famous as me at this moment.

I embarrassed myself yesterday. And today I’ll be having a meal with my peer mentors despite myself. Waaaah, I don’t know how to apologize for the humiliation. I injured my knee. My blood smeared on the floor, but I could still walk, fortunately.

I dishonored the Angel Gear Code. In addition, this will be my first time meeting all my peer mentors. Yeepoon reassures me that they’re only worried about my injury. She means it. The fourth year peer mentor is super kind.

We're in a restaurant near the university. Next to me is my pretty peer mentor and in front of her is Jet, the fourth year peer mentor. The seat opposite me remains empty, waiting for the tardy guy to appear.

"Let's order first," says Jet after we've reintroduced ourselves.

"What about the third-year senior?" I ask in puzzlement.

"Oh, he'll be here soon. He said he was practicing soccer with his friends. Sports Day is next month." I nod.

Around twenty minutes later, our dishes are served. The Superior Prince is still nowhere to be seen.

"Will he come?"

"He just texted me. Almost here now."

What a relief. I thought I'd starve. I don't care much about him but I care about the food before me. My vision blurs from hunger.

The customers soon croon softly. I turn my attention to the newcomer stirring the crowd and spot a very tall man with a flawless face and a nose as defined as a twenty one story tall concrete dam. He walks in with a straight face, drenched in sweat, wearing a BG Glass shirt. I suppose he greatly values Thainess. Hold up... he looks familiar. I think I've seen him somewhere.

"There he is. P'Arc is here."

Arc?

Arc??

That Arc??

That motherfucker Arcccccccccccc!!

The one who flipped me off with a photo last week.

It takes me a while to collect myself. I wish I could slap myself to check if I'm dreaming. Once he gets closer I realize this is reality. This is the Superior Prince everyone is talking about? My feet twitch on the verge of kicking his ass in personal annoyance, but I'm his junior. Plus, he has no clue that I'm an admin of the Engineer Cute Boy page.

"Sorry, P'Jet. Sorry, Yeepoon. Intense practice."

I purse my lips, watching the tall figure sitting across from me. Now that I get to meet him in person, I'm amazed. Unfortunately, his charm fails to earn my forgiveness.

"Oh, Arc, this is Arm, the freshman."

"Hey." I say curtly, averting my gaze... The other customers are staring at us.

"Seems like a pain in the neck," replies Arc.

"Not as much as someone here."

"A cheeky prick like you is a tiny bit less than a delinquent."

"Wow, you guys sure get along. Do you know how shocked I was when Arm got our gear code? What a coincidence that your first names are similar. Haha." To avoid any possible physical fight, Yeepoon changes the topic. This is not over. I must show my opposition. It doesn't feel good that our names sound alike.

"Similar names? I'm Anon with an 'N' meaning a person with no debt." I fucking hate the meaning of my name.

"Mine ends with an 'L'."

"What does it mean?" I ask.

"The god of fire."

Whoa, holy fucking shit! With an 'L' or an 'N' the names have totally different meanings, like the sky and the Atlantic Ocean. He's definitely a fire, flipping me off in seething anger in my inbox.

Today is proof that this is the Angel Gear Code. The fourth year senior is the campus prince, the third-year asshole is the Superior Prince, the second-year girl is the engineering princess. What about me? I'm nothing but a boy who tripped and fell off the stage for everyone to see.

"Oh, Arc, is everything okay now?" Jet starts without context after we start eating.

"I don't care anymore."

"What happened?" asks Yeepoon.

"The admin of the Engineer Cute Boy page posted my photo without my permission," says Arc. Yeepoon and I, startled, exchange awkward glances.

"Do you know who the admin is?" asks Jet.

"No. The abbreviation for his name is 'A.' When I see him, I'll beat him to a pulp."

Crap!! Judging by his shins, I'll be a complete mess.

"There's no harm done, right?" I blurt out for some reason, flustered. Still, I must meddle to protect myself and my loved ones.

“Well, yeah. But I don’t want my photos posted. I don’t want to be famous. I don’t want to be the topic of conversations. Got it?”

“It’s nice to be talked about.”

“It’s annoying, okay?”

That’s it. Arc is fucking unapproachable, the epitome of men. No gentleness toward any sexes. Does he see our feelings as a ball to kick without caring about the pain?

“Do you have Facebook or LINE?” I look up from my food to Arc, not blinking.

“My Facebook? Won’t it annoy you?”

“I need your contact for meals with peer mentees or other activities. I’ll block you myself if you happen to be a pesky prick.” Ouch, that hurts. Are his parents straightforward like this?

“Arm Anon,” I say levelly.

“Am I supposed to find you just like that? Type it.” Arc tosses his phone to me. This is excitingggggg.

I type my account on his phone. In three seconds, someone sends him a request. A girl with a fabulous profile picture, one of the waiting 4,503 accounts. Fuuuuuuuuck, he’s leaving thousands of people waiting.

“Are you done? Why don’t you eat my phone instead of the food if you’re going to take that long?” Arc snaps.

“Done.”

I return his phone and resume eating. I start to feel cold after a while, my hair standing on ends under the draft. Yeepoon is clueless in her cardigan while I’m in this flimsy shirt.

Noticing my sensitivity to the cold, Jet speaks. "Arc, did you bring your department jacket? Lend it to him."

"I didn't bring it. Why?"

"Arm is cold."

"I'm not." I object. The guy opposite to me narrows his eyes.

"Serves you right for sitting under the draft." How mean.

"..."

"Come sit next to me. It's not cold here." Arc gestures to his peer mentor to move to Yeepoon's side. The Superior Prince is the most powerful here.

After the seat adjustment, the guy beside me scoffs with his low voice, a sinister voice that drives me on the verge of losing it.

"I heard something happened yesterday. A kid fell off the stage?"

"P'Arc, don't mock him." Yeepoon interrupts meekly.

"I'm not mocking him. I'm chatting."

"I feel bad for Arm."

"I don't. How humiliating. Leave this gear code."

"No. And I wasn't eliminated because of the fall."

"Oh, I see. You're not tall enough."

Fuck! Can I hate my peer mentor?

“How tall are you?”

“170cm.”

“Are you bad at measuring? Seriously.”

“I’m 165cm. Happy?”

“How small. Adorable.”

“It’s genetic. Who would be towering like you?” I say, getting furious by the second. I wish I could beat his ass right now. I’ve been holding a grudge since he flipped me off on the fan page.

“Hm! Am I wrong for being tall?” I fucking hate his chuckle.

“Why are you messing with me?”

“I don’t want to tease anyone else but you, nong Arm. It’s not fun.”

What a jerk.

“Cut it out, Arc. Let him eat,” Jet warns, ceasing the battle.

We scowl at each other for almost an hour before letting our stomachs rest. We all play on our phones to kill time. I accept Arc’s request on Facebook while Yeepoon and Jet text their friends away. The handsome Arc is the only one picking his teeth quietly.

“P’Arc.” As expected.

“Yes?”

Arc gazes up at the newcomer. Is she an accounting student, given the brooch on her collar?

“Can I take a photo with you?”

“I’m busy.”

“But you finished the meal. That’s why I came here.”

“I’m building up my mood.”

Yeah... His reply abashes the girl. To be honest, I’m scared. I’m so terrified of this guy that I don’t want to be part of this gear code anymore.

“Let’s take a photo of our code, then. Arc, are you in the mood now?” Jet interrupts with a smile, dying to tease his peer mentee.

“I’m always in the mood.”

“Pervert. Be thoughtful of my girlfriend.” I turn to Yeepoon. Ugh, she’s beaming.

“Your girlfriend is worse than all of us.” I second that.

“Come on, let’s take a photo. Use your phone, Arc.”

“Okay. On three, two.”

SNAP!!

Everyone seems happy. We split up and go back home. Once I’m at my dormitory, I check the likes of the photo of the Angel Gear Code on my phone. But... Ah...

Arc...

He uploaded the photo of half his face and tagged all of us.

Uggggggggggh, are there any more strange people around here so they can get their brains checked together? I’m huffing. Where are the other peer mentors and me? Huh!?

Where? I can only see his left eyebrow in the frame and a glimpse of the pot of spicy soup. His left ear occupies the rest of the area. Fuuuuuuuuuuuuck!

'Your skin is so smooth.'

'I'm jealous of Arm for being in the same gear code as the Superior Prince.'

'Waahh, Arc's left ear.'

'P'Arc, P'Arc, AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!'

I found it. Folks crazier than Arc are my department mates.

I become more popular after the photo was posted. They're not pursuing me, no. The world just threw me to this gear code with the cheekiest peer mentor whom people are somehow still smitten with.

No more pointless questions like, 'Have you eaten?' or 'How's studying?' There's only 'Where's Arc?'

Yeepoon told me Arc earned the nickname 'the Superior Prince' because he was considered more good looking than the campus prince, yet he refused to participate in the contest, claiming he didn't want to be the center of attention. Therefore, he was a rarely spotted, secluded guy.

Arc accepted my request to follow him on Instagram last night. Fifty percent of his gallery are photos of soccer shoes, soccer fields, soccer shirts, and other soccer stuff. I wonder if he studies to be an engineer or a national soccer player.

Runlla *When will you stop being handsome?*

Kitti James *Share your handsomeness with me, will you? #fuckyou*

JittiRain Handsome as usual. Love you always

Peeved, I jeer at him in the common.

Armm01 Don't you do anything else besides playing soccer?

I don't expect him to care, simply making the most of my free time. Shortly after, I blink repeatedly in disbelief at the latest notification from Arc.

Arc_ano! @Armm01 I do other things too but I'll block you if you fuck with me

Hmmmm, you bastard. I don't care that you're older. I have no respect for him!! How infuriating. I throw my phone on the bed and enter the bathroom with a towel to calm down. I come back out to Sand glaring at me.

"What?" I ask in confusion.

"Your phone keeps chiming. Girls, huh?" Sand says, turning back to his laptop to continue playing the online game without another glance at me.

Curiosity prompts me to check my phone. All the notifications are from Instagram, and the said Instagram allows me to view a photo someone has posted with my account tagged.

It's not a good, handsome or interesting photo. It's a photo of me falling off the stage with a caption that gets me shaking with rage.

Arc_ano! My peer mentee is a polite boy. He bows on the floor before presenting himself.

@Armm01

You piece of shit.

Arcccccccccccc!

Arcccccccccccccccc!!

Chapter 2

Be patient in the gear code, beware of the Superior Prince

The attack from my third-year peer mentor is quite sudden, and I ponder on how to respond for some time. To avoid painting myself as a junior disrespecting his senior, I keep my resentment inside and wait for the day to take revenge.

It wouldn't be a big deal if the other party wasn't Arc. His teasing could possibly lead all students in the department to gang up on me, and that would hurt much more than falling off the stage, seriously. How can people view his post on his private Instagram account? Ugh!! His followers screenshotted and shared it for the sake of gossiping.

Aside from me falling from the stage, I'm now famous in the department for being Arc's peer mentee. The first-year, second-year, third-year and fourth year students all know it. Seriously, everybody knows the god damn handsome yet unfortunate Arm from electrical engineering.

"Arm."

"Yes?" I immediately respond to someone calling my name.

Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa, it's Angun, the first-year engineering princess. I'm touched that she's greeting me. I recall rooting for her after I fell off the stage. Her dance moves hit right in the feels, unlike Theme, who won the first round selection by performing a sad country song. Did I root for him? Of course, I had no other choice.

"I wanted to see you but never had a chance. We don't share any classes."

“Why don’t we exchange LINE or Facebook contacts for better convenience?”

Yes! It’s my first year and I might get to date the princess of the department!

We’re in front of the main hall to participate in an activity run by second-years. Even if I sometimes skip it, I occasionally join in to avoid problems with any concerned parties. Thankfully all these activities aren’t deemed necessary by the university and department. I can rest assured that I’ll be able to graduate unscathed even if I don’t participate.

“Can I have your LINE ID?”

“Sure.” I whip out my phone faster than a gymnast.

I go to my QR code and let Angun scan it. Finally, I have the engineering princess’s LINE ID.

“Now we can chat,” Angun chirps, bringing a smile to my face. I chime in.

“Right.”

“Oh, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“Say it. I can do anything.” I’ll do anything for you without thinking.

“I heard you’re in the same gear code as P’Arc from civil engineering. Can you tell him to accept my requests on Facebook and IG?”

Erm...

She didn’t approach me because of my looks and charisma.

Arc again. How many people have tried to befriend me because of that damn Superior Prince? What's so great about him? He's just more handsome, taller, more popular and presumably richer. That's all!!

When it's my turn to shine, you'll all be intimidated.

All the rant gushes in my mind. I answer Angun softly.

"I'll tell him for you."

"You're the kindest boy, Arm. Thank you so much. Here..." She hands over a sweet colored paper bag. "Macarons. As thanks."

"You don't have to."

"Please accept those. I bought them just for you." The engineering princess deliberately planned to bribe me. Sigh.

"Well, thank you."

"No problem, at all. Don't forget to tell P'Arc for me," She says with a wide grin. Damn it! Give me back the time I rooted for you.

"I won't forget. I'll tell him. The problem is I don't know when we'll meet up again."

"Why?"

"As you know, P'Arc is like a ghost. You're lucky if you stumble across him."

It's the truth...

Since the meal with all my peer mentors two weeks ago, I haven't seen him at all despite... being in the same department.

After the activity, I play games with my gang at the dorms. In the morning, I have breakfast and attend my classes as usual without expecting to see the invisible man at stuffy noon. Daaaaaaaaaamn, was it Angun's black magic that lured him out today?

I use the chance when Arc looks elsewhere to dip my chin nearly on my chest to stupidly hide from him. I don't want to see him right now, mainly to avoid being the center of attention. People have been bothering me because of his reply to me on Instagram. This could be worse.

"What would you like, son?" asks a lady at the beverage stall kindly.

"A...Ah, peach tea, please."

"What about the handsome boy behind you?"

"One bottle of water, please." Fuck, why are you buying water here and breathing on my neck? What should I do? Should I greet him out of courtesy or leave without a word?

"The water is seven baht. Wait a second for the peach tea, son. I'm right on it." says the lady.

"I'll pay for the peach tea for him as well." Arc holds out a one hundred baht banknote. I turn to him abruptly.

"How do you know it's me?"

"I'm your peer mentor." Look at him. I didn't plan to greet him, but I couldn't dismiss it anymore.

"Where have you been for weeks? I didn't see you anywhere."

"None of your business." This is how you speak to your peer mentee? Ugghh, you asshole. I wish to run to Yeepoon and ask her to cut me out of this gear code.

“Yeah, it’s none of my freaking business. Thanks for the tea.” I accept the cup of peach tea and head to the food stall, unwilling to converse with that motherfucker. Somehow, I’m being followed by a ghost.

“Why are you following me?” I grunt in a whisper.

“You’re full of yourself. I’m going to buy food.” He walks ahead of me and points at the menu he wants before turning to me. “What do you want?”

“Crispy pork with basil.”

“Mm...” He walks off upon my answer. Why did he even ask!?

“Oh, you’re not paying for me?”

“Why? It’s yours.”

“You asked.”

“Can’t I just ask?”

Arc!!

“I never want to see you just to be messed with. But since you’re here, my friend Angun, the first-year engineering princess, has sent her requests to you on Facebook and IG. Can you accept them?” I bring this up now so I don’t have to find him later.

Arc narrows his eyes at me and answers in an even voice.

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Ugh, I’m telling you so you’ll accept her requests. On IG, too.”

“I’ll think about it.” He sounds like a fucking liar.

“I know you’re handsome, but quit playing hard to get.”

“Eat with me and I’ll tell you.”

“...” Upon my silence, Arc tugs my collar to keep me in place. Amid the bustling in the cafeteria, everyone stares at us.

“Will-you-sit-wih-me-Arm?” How am I supposed to decline when he stresses each word like that?

“Very well. I’ll tell my friends first. Let go of my shirt. You wrinkled it.”

The tie isn’t easy to do. I can’t dress however I want like the seniors. The double standards. I’m not even allowed to wear jeans, I must follow the dress code of slacks, ties, and leather shoes. Worse, the name tag is required.

“Be quick.”

“Bossy.”

“I’ll also tell my friends I’ll eat with my peer mentee, so shut up.” Due to the final command from on high, I return to Sand and Pipo, who have been observing the situation.

They seem to understand and gesture at me to hurry up. Eventually, I’m sitting stiffly with Arc while all eyes are on us.

“How’s it going?” Asks the third-year peer mentor a few moments after we’ve started eating.

“Good. How about you?”

“It’s not my job to answer your questions.”

You piece of shit!

“What about the cheering activity? Did you go?” The question sends me shivers. Well... I don't remember how many times I participated. I usually skipped it to have shaved ice with my gang.

“The cheering activity. Ah... I did go. Not every time, though,” I explain vaguely to save myself because I heard the seniors are strict. I have no idea what kind of senior Arc is. He may take this system seriously, who knows?

“Arm, why did you do that?” See? He raises his voice.

“P'Arc... I went a few times...”

“That's why I'm scolding you.”

“I...”

“Just cut it. I never went once back in my days.”

Oh! A plot twist.

“P'Yeepoon told me I wouldn't get my gear if I didn't complete my activity hours,” I snitch. The Superior Prince might help me obtain my gear to show off to girls.

“Why would you want something like that? I don't even have one.”

“Oh.”

The Angel Gear Code is sure something elseeeeeeeeeeeee.

“The seniors were drilling it into us that the gears are such an honor. You can give yours to your crush. It's cool.” Part of me wants it, yet my laziness wins.

“If you want to give your gear to a girl, they sell it at the student association. Buy as many as you need.”

“That’s it?”

“What’s so complicated about it?”

He’s right.

We continue chowing down our food in silence. Meanwhile my LINE notifications keep chiming. I check my phone and read a message from someone familiar. Angun, the engineering princess, says she’s watching Arc and me. Is she a ghost haunting me? The chat box is flooded with her pleading. I take multiple deep breaths, waiting for a chance. I finish the meal and speak when the tall guy is about to stand.

“Where are you going?”

“Put away the plate. I have class after this.” Why are you being responsible now?

“What about my friend’s request? You said you’d tell me if I sat with you.”

“I kind of hinted that I wouldn’t accept them. Clear?”

“No.”

“What’s with your confused face?”

“I’m confused about everything that has to do with you.”

“You’ll understand.”

“You tricked me.”

“When did I? I said I’d tell you after eating with me. My answer is no. I don’t accept requests from strangers. Is it clear, my peer mentee?”

He throws a bomb at me and leaves like nothing has ever happened, whistling away. I remain here with a dry smile because I gave Angun so much hope in the chat box. I have to get over it. I shouldn’t have risked it with this damn Superior Prince. Uggggggggh!

My fucked up life continues. On Friday evening, Yeepoon asks me on the phone to come to the IE building. When I arrive, I find she’s not alone. Jet, the charming fourth year peer mentor, is also there.

“Hi, P’Yeepoon. Hi P’Jet.” I greet them.

“Hey, Arm. Sorry for bothering you.”

“It’s okay. What’s the matter?”

Yeepoon cracks a sheepish smile and passes a bag to me before explaining. “P’Arc’s soccer shoes. P’Jet borrowed them and forgot to return them. We both won’t be here until Sunday and we think P’Arc might need the shoes. Can you deliver them to him?” Arc again? I don’t want to see his face.

“We have an errand today. We wouldn’t borrow you otherwise.” Jet adds. They act all pitiful.

“Why don’t you give him a call?”

“He didn’t pick up. Maybe he’s at the soccer field.”

“All right. I’ll take care of it.”

“Thanks a lot, Arm. I’ll treat you to several meals.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

They leave with this significant mission assigned to me. Arc is known for being an invisible man rarely to be seen, jumping from place to place. He disappears when we need him, and he’s not easy to contact to the point of irritation. Fortunately, Jet gave me the location. I don’t have to break a sweat searching for him.

Hold up! How many soccer fields are there in the university?

Whatever. Let’s go to one first. I stride to my car and head to the main soccer field. Numerous students are playing soccer there, so I scan everyone with my sharp eyes. It’s not hard to spot Arc as he stands out. I could see him from Mars.

I search for him for around ten minutes and fail. I call Yeepoon and discover she’s at the field on the other side near the dormitory area. Okay. Let’s go...

He’s not there either. I go looking for him until sunset. The field is illuminated by spotlights, yet they’re not helpful in the slightest. The Superior Prince isn’t here.

I carry the soccer shoes to the fields in the university in search of the owner, cursing at how difficult it is to find him. There are dozens of soccer fields. They even play soccer in the smallest open area. Respect to all passionate players.

An hour later, my lungs are about to give in. I stop at the field at the Architecture Department. If he’s not there, I’ll throw the shoes into the river. Where the hell is he?

“Left. motherfucker. Left!”

“Idiot, wrong side! I’m here!” A clamor from the field. I watch the scene for a moment and heave a sigh of relief. The familiar tall guy is running in sweat with his friends over there.

“P’Arc!” I shout. Once he turns his head to me I resume, “P’Jet asked me to return your soccer shoes!”

“I’m playing soccer, can’t you see?”

“I’ll leave them at the side.”

“Someone might steal them. Stay there.”

I roll my eyes. I have to keep watch on the shoes after bringing them here? Instead of spending my Friday having something delicious with my gang, I’m stuck at the side of the field among the girls, supposedly their girlfriends. They remind me of the Air Force Wives Association.

So, I wait. They wrap up after another hour. The tall guy saunters from the center of the field to where I am. Arc is in an FC Barcelona shirt and black Nike shoes. Despite the amount of people here, he hogs everyone’s attention. He stands out more than Chris Hemsworth at this point.

“What’s wrong? Why the hell are you pouting?” he jeers even after making me wait.

“Took you long enough.”

“You’ll get used to it. It usually takes longer.”

“Hmph!”

“I’m thirsty,” says Arc.

“So what?”

“Buy me a bottle of water. I’m tired.”

“Why do I have to?”

“Did Yeepoon never mention our tradition? During the time the freshman must be in line, the seniors can order them to do anything, or you leave the gear code.”

Is there such a ludicrous rule?

“I’m not going. There. Many people brought you water.” I point at the water bottles of various brands nearby. They are plastered with colorful notes with his name, ‘Arc’, on them.

Throughout the hour of waiting, students placed the water bottles here one by one until they were all over. I guess this is not Arc’s first time receiving water from admirers.

“I don’t drink water from just anyone,” he lowers his voice.

“But they bought it for you.”

“Go buy me one... Now”

“All right. Whatever.”

I dash to the only beverage stall that’s still open, grab two water bottles, and pay for them. One of them is for me since I’ve been running around, and the other is for the worst fucking peer mentor of all.

“Here you go.” I toss a bottle of water at him as soon as I get back.

“Girlfriends usually wait for their boyfriends when playing soccer. “Why is your peer mentee here?” asks Arc’s friend close by. Arc wiggles his eyebrows in response. I want to kick his legs so bad.

“This is Arm,” he introduces me to his friends.

“Oh, the one who tripped on his own foot and fell off the stage?”

Fuck.

“I was dizzy,” I make an excuse, though it doesn’t work.

“Don’t participate in the contest. It doesn’t suit you. You’re too cute.” This is frustrating. What does being cute have to do with it? I’m capable enough to be the prince of the department, but I won’t waste my time arguing.

I watch Arc remove the lid from the bottle and chug it all down as if he will never drink a single drop of water again in his life. Once finished, he stretches his hand to me like a kid.

“What?”

“Give me the other one.” It’d be rude if I refused. I’m also thirsty, though...

“Take it.” This is a documentary of my miserable life. I ran around looking for my peer mentor in exhaustion and had to watch him drink my water.

Arc removes the lid and chugs it down like earlier. This time he returns the bottle to me in weariness after a few gulps.

“Just say you’re thirsty.”

“I’m not.” I object, swallowing.

“I’ll drink it all, then.”

And he means it. Waaaaaaaah.

“Thanks a lot. I’m off.” Arc grabs the soccer shoes I carried all the way here and gets ready to leave.

"You're leaving?" asks one of the beefy guys.

"Yeah."

"See you tonight."

"Don't be late."

"Arc, why don't you take your peer mentee to experience the world?" Arc halts. He turns around and stares at me before asking.

"Wanna go with us?"

"To where?" I ask, scratching my head.

"Bang-on Pochana." Oh, a restaurant. I'm hungry, and it could be their treat.

"Your treat?"

"Yeah."

"I'll go."

"Okay, see you at nine." Why do they have dinner so late? I wonder about it, watching the tall figure walking away without asking anything.

"I'll be off now." Arc is gone. I have no reason to stay.

"Arm." Someone calls.

"Yes?"

"Take your water."

"Water?"

“Your water.”

I look at the water bottles from Arc’s fans. They’ve changed. The name on the notes is roughly crossed, and I’m unsure how to feel.

Arc

Arm

I dress casually and exit the dormitory in sandals, leaving my best friends, Sand and Pipo, to have dinner together. Since Arc will pick me up, I get to save up gas.

“Hop in.” A black car pulls over before I see the driver lowering the window.

“Okay, okay.” I slide inside the car and study the third-year peer mentor from head to toe. He’s still the same Arc, the Superior Prince, a soccer shirt with shorts and... sandals, as usual.

“Is it far? I’m famished.” My stomach has been growling since we split up at the field. I’m ready to wolf down some food. Arc looks at me in bafflement.

“Why didn’t you eat?”

“Oh, you said we’d be out for dinner.”

“When did I say that? I said I’d take you to Bang-on Pochana.”

“Yeah, the restaurant.”

“It’s a bar, Arm. Don’t be stupid.” Ugh, I’m an idiot! It can’t be helped that I don’t know, so I stay quiet until we arrive.

The bars near the university are bustling with clubbers on Friday night, most of them being students. I enter the bar with the tall guy. I don’t want to mention our clothes. Arc looks

good in everything because of his face. I can't say the same for myself. Arc wears a Manchester United shirt today. I wonder which team he's a fan of exactly.

"Here he is! P'Arc!"

A group of dozen seniors greets the guy beside me.

Bars are full of familiar faces, especially engineering students. They're everywhere. The next table is also occupied by engineering students. Theme, the first-year engineering prince, is there presumably with his peer mentor as well. They hang out at bars often lately and even bribe the bouncers to allow underage students to get in.

"Arm, come here." Arc pulls me by the hand to sit next to him.

"Heeeeeeeeeey, this is Arm? How cute," someone teases. I guess he's not one of the guys at the soccer field.

"My peer mentee. Don't hit on him."

"Why are you so protective?"

"He's my junior."

"..." Arc is my superhero

"But you can give him any lessons. Don't hold back." What the heck!?

"I'm a good boy. Spare me, will you?" Let me live in peace. Arc alone already made me miserable.

"What a cheeky guy. You drink beer?"

"Yes."

“Order some food first. He hasn’t eaten,” my peer mentor interrupts in a low voice. He waves a server over and orders some snacks and dishes.

“Order whatever you want,” says Arc.

“Egg fried rice.”

“One egg fried rice, please,” Arc tells the server. One of the guys then starts.

“It’s red on red tonight. Let’s make a bet. The losers pay.” Holy crap. I’m stuck in a gambling group. I crack a weak smile without saying anything.

“Arc leads the Man United team. Raise your hand if you bet on Man United.”

FWIP!! All of them.

Except me.

“Arm are you betting on Liverpool?” Don’t ask meeeeeeeee. I just didn’t lift my hand in timeeeeeeeee.

“That settles it. You pay if you lose.” Bring it on if they want to fight me. I’ll tell Solanke to kick their asses. I’m joining despite knowing nothing good comes from gambling. I’m sick of myself.

“O...Okay. I’ll pay if I lose.”

The fried rice is served ten minutes later. I munch on it with beer, watching the match start. The seniors focus on the projector screen without blinking. The energy of the other tables is insane like wowwwwww.

“Hey, Arc. What brings you here?”

"I should be asking you that, Warm." I look at my peer mentor greeting a senior with gray hair. He's just as good looking.

"The campus prince," someone tells me.

"So handsome. I'm jealous." I want to have a face like that. Is there a chance?

"Not as handsome as your peer mentor. You should be proud to be his peer mentee."

"Ha..."

"Why are you pursing your lips? Want a slap?" Now Arc notices.

I have no intention of arguing with him. I eat and drink casually and groove along with the music in a good mood. Liverpool FC scored 1-0 in the first ten minutes. Hahahahaha.

"How nice." I jeer at Arc.

"It's just started. Don't get ahead of yourself."

"You'll cry when they score more. Are you suppressing yourself from kicking a fuss?"

Arc rocks my head in annoyance without a word. I'm not mad. Why? I'm on the lead.

Thirty minutes later...

"Let's go!"

"No, no," I whine.

"Yeah, my child Man United! Wooooooooohoooooo!" The cheering reverberates. I put my palm over my face as soon as Alexis kicks the ball into the goal with his left leg.

An hour later...

“Come on, come on, and.... Goal!!! Whoa, 2-1 now!”

Fifteen minutes before the match ends...

“Go... Step off, Mata. Go... Like that and ohhhhhh!”

“3-1 now. My child Man United!”

Even two minutes before it's over...

“A...Another goal! Get itttttt!”

“...”

“Woooooooooooo!!”

Please look at how I'm on the verge of tears. Man United FC won against Liverpool FC by 4-1. No chance to even counterattack. My heart shatters as I check if I have enough money in my wallet to pay for these assholes' booze.

“H...How much?” I ask the server.

“1,470 baht.”

Goodness. Why do I have to spend my monthly allowance on this silly thing? Not to mention that I only had one glass of beer. This is not worth it.

“Wow, Arm, you're the man. Thanks a lot. Let's go home.” They're out on their way, leaving me resting my head on the table alone.

“Are you dead?”

I forgot Arc was here. Please... I'm not in the mood to fight...

“Put away my body.” Arc guffaws.

"You suck at this. You'll get used to it. Here!"

"What?"

"Your money. 1,470 baht." He actually hands me the money. I'm at a loss.

"Why?"

"I'm worried you won't have money to buy food until the end of the month."

"So?"

"I'm lending my money to you. Pay me back when you get your allowance next month.

But now..."

"..."

"You owe me"

Arc pats my shoulder, grabs his key, and heads to his car with that main character vibe, leaving me with the money on the table and tears soothing my heart.

Dad said I'd never be poor with this name. Liar. He lied to me! Remember? I'm... Anon with Debt!!

I attend my classes in the morning like usual. I check Instagram and see Arc uploading a photo of the projecting screen displaying the victory of Man United FC with a caption that makes me grit my teeth.

Two times. He did it two times.

He hasn't deleted the photo of me falling off the stage and now he's doing this again.

Arc Anon! Man Utd won. Poor Liverpool. But poorer is some sucky prick.

There are admirers supporting and blindly praising him, of course.

Parehippy Team Man Utd. Team Arc.

TOR_EN Last night was on fire. Your table screamed so loud.

Arc_AnoI @TOR_EN Not as loud as you when you flirted with bar girls

Bello05_x I saw you. You wore a Man Utd shirt

Knowing who he means in the caption, I comment in a flash.

Armm01 Some people love to gang up on someone

In a minute, I receive a burning comeback.

Arc_anol @Armm01 Someone deserves some teasing.

Armm01 @Arc_AnoI Someone loves to mess with others.

Arc_anol @Armm01 Someone wants to be messed with #shutupdebtor

Armm01 @Arc_anol I'll pay you today come see me

Arc_anol @Armm01 Nah sick of your face

I fight the urge to hurl my phone to vent my anger. Arc ended the conversation when I wasn't ready. I quickly slide in his direct message on Instagram.

Armm01

Give me your bank account number I'll transfer the money

Arc_anol

No

Armm01

I don't want to owe you

Arc_anol

Go study

Arc is the master of switching subjects. I type down the whole paragraph for him, partly because I don't like to owe someone money for too long. When I send the message... Huh? Why doesn't it go? Huh!? He blocked me!! Arcccccccc, why the hell did you block meeeeeeee?

No messages can be sent now. Okay, I lost. No matter how much I curse him, it's useless if I'm blocked. It's up to him, I guess. Is he my peer mentor or my father? How confusing.

I don't see Arc for a week like he's dead. If he ever shows up, it means he has reincarnated. I'm still blocked on all social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, and even LINE. This bastard acted like a dictator just because my words irritated him. They say Arc is the real deal. I see it now that I'm experiencing it myself.

"You're checking IG again? Didn't P'Arc unblock you?" asks Sand, knowing what has been occupying my mind.

"No."

"What a jaded man."

"There's a line between a jaded man and a jerk."

"He's not wrong to block you. Like a claw machine, people think it works randomly when it actually depends on the players," Pipo points out, what he says drives me nuts.

“How can you connect being blocked to a claw machine?”

“You don’t get it, Arm. Why don’t you try it first?”

“Shut up. I don’t want to be obsessed like you,” I grumble. I note the lecture without another word with my best friends.

PING!!

All attention is on my phone on my side. I quietly check the notification to find it’s from Arc, the Superior Prince. He sent me a request on facebook. Son of a bitch! He blocks and unblocks me whenever he pleases.

I’m not the type to play hard to get with my peer mentors. I wonder if he’ll apologize, so I text him after accepting his request.

Armm Anon

ಽ•x•`?

Anol Paraminphisan

The fuck is that?

What a rude jerk...

Armm Anon

Just apologize if you want.

Anol Paraminphisan

All in your head

Armm Anon

Oh, did you send a request to ask for your money?

Give me your bank account number and I'll get it over with

Anol Paraminphisan

Stop talking about money

Or I'll block you again

Armm Anon

Why? I don't want to owe you for too long

I can just pay in cash just tell me where

Before I can send another message, a facebook notification chimes. What the fuuuuuuuck? Damn, he blocked me again.

Arc comes and goes as he likes. I'll report you to Mark Zuckerberg to get you banned. Ugh, he has no manners on social media. You evil peer mentor! Fuck you, you Superior Prince. You !#\$%&*(^&\$@#

"The fuck is wrong with you, Arm? You're fidgeting." My friends snaps me back to reality, but my concentration is ruined. I pray the class ends soon. I'll collect all of Arc's mischief and rat him out to Yeepoon and Jet so they'll cut him off our gear code.

"Fuck..."

Unfortunately, it rains before I exit the building. The students are writhing like worms in boiling water. Some gather in the building while some run out in the rain to find shelters. My gang and I are no different.

“Let’s go to the café at the agriculture department,” I suggest.

“Is there a claw machine?”

“I’ll punch your stomach if you mention a claw machine again.” It works. Pipo shuts up immediately. Sand rolls his eyes in contemplation and nods.

We jog along the hallway and dart through the rain a short distance to the café at the agriculture department. Despite the short distance, I’m soaked from my shirt to my underwear.

“What do you want?” I ask my friends as soon as we’ve arrived.

“Two mochas. I’ll get a table.” They explore the café to find an empty table. Well, many students are taking shelter from the rain here. Luckily, there’s a place for us to sit.

I order our beverages and drag myself to the table. We chat for a while before killing time on our phones. It’s time I snitch to my other peer mentors.

“It’s P’Arc. Hey... that’s P’Arc. Waaaaah.”

The costumers stir upon someone’s arrival with his friends. Their workshop shirts are drenched, yet that dude looks fucking handsome.

The tall guy steps inside and heads to the counter. He orders his coffee and follows his friends to a table on the other side. I swear Arc noticed me sitting here.

“That’s your peer mentor,” whispers Sand. This is the right move even though Arc is quite far from us. Arc’s nosy radar is vast, excellent in detecting people talking about him.

“Not anymore. I banished him.”

“Can you do that?”

“He blocked me.”

“Don’t annoy him, then.”

“Too late.”

Just focus on our things. In fifteen minutes, however, Pipo smacks my leg repeatedly saying “Hey, hey, hey,” I turn my head to the guy walking toward our table with an unfriendly face.

Arc settles in an empty chair without a single word, acting like nothing has happened. He just blocked me on facebook, though.

“Hi, P’Arc.” Sand and people greet the senior.

“Hey.”

“Is something wrong?”

“I need to talk to Arm.”

“Sure. Go ahead.” They ignore us completely by putting on their earphones and playing games.

“Why would you run in the rain?” The start of the conversation stupefies me. Will I answer nicely? Who am I? This is Arm Anon, the cheekiest boy in the all boys school.

“What? Do we know each other?”

“Arm.”

“We doooooon’t.”

“Wanna get slapped? Quit messing around.”

"You blocked me. I don't talk to strangers."

"Arc. We got our coffee. Let's go," says one of his friends. He turns his charming face to them and nods.

"Gotta go."

"Yeah."

"Did you bring an umbrella?" He asks.

"Excuse me, why are you asking?"

"Okay. You're going to be like this, huh?"

Arc stands up and marches to the counter where the worker is. He points at me and speaks loudly.

"Can you deliver a message to that kid? We don't know each other."

"..."

"Take care of yourself since it's raining. I'll kick your ass if you get sick!"

"..."

"That's all."

Arc grabs his beverage and leaves amid everyone's confusion, including mine...

What's with him?

Chapter 3

Worse Than The Superior Prince Is Hell

Arc, the Superior Prince, is the third child among the son and daughter in his family. His full name is Anol Praminphisan. I don't understand why rich people have dramatically long surnames.

According to the background, he's the self important youngest child as he's spoiled by his parents. The eldest daughter is Im, married to the son of the owner of a European car showroom. The middle son will graduate from the International Engineering Department on the other side of our university.

What about the Superior Prince? He's currently my fucking annoying peer mentor.

"P'Arc is super evil. I thought he was a DC character."

Pipo breaks the silence after letting me dig into the third-year jerk's background for some time. This is quite basic since everyone knows it. To dig into his abnormal nature is, however... Definitely not a piece of cake.

"He's always messing around. Does he think he can do anything because he's handsome?" I say, pursing my lips.

"Right! You're never wrong when you're good looking. See? The students were swooning." Sand chimes in.

I glance around to find all eyes are on me.

“Good thing I’m just his peer mentee.” I can’t imagine how his future lover will survive until graduation with countless enemies. Is his future lover wrong? No. Arc is wrong for being born a pain in the ass.

Arc said he’d kick my ass if I got sick. As if I’d be scared!!! Who am I? Anon with No Debt whose health never worries his parents. Why? I get sick so often that they’ve made peace with it.

Teenagers are rebellious. They get tempted by all the warnings. My father once forbade me to ride a motorcycle, so I went to my relatives’ house the next day and borrowed my cousin’s big bike. I ended up swerving into a coriander garden. My mother once forbade me to travel far, so I, as a good son, had a five day Singapore trip with my friends in eighth grade.

Does Arc think he can stop me from doing anything?

“Let’s go. I’m uncomfortable being the center of attention,” I say, rising, looking at my best friends’ perplexed faces in resignation.

“What the hell, Arm? It’s raining.”

“Have you never listened to this song? It says you shouldn’t fear the rain because it moisturizes you. P’Arc and his friends also left in the rain.”

“They have umbrellas, dumbass.”

“Are your bodies that weak? Don’t be dramatic.” Sand and Pipo get worked up, hyped.

“Let’s go, then. What the fuck are you waiting for?”

The café isn’t that far from the department building, but the pouring rain soaks us. After we dash from the department building to the parking lot, we’re unimaginably slovenly, our hair plastering our heads. My image is ruined.

“Why the fuck did you turn on the AC? It’s cold,” Sand snarls, shaking, once we plunge into my car.”

“Aw... what a weak child star. How adorable,” I tease. Pipo laughs.

“Get in the back, Sand. I’ll cover the draft from you. The temperature is perfect, yet you’re whining.” Pipo switches to the front seat beside me before I accelerate the car to our dormitory in delight.

Right. The singer says you shouldn’t fear the rain because it moisturizes you.

“A...A...Achoo!”

Shit. I have a fever...

I realize my body weakens when I wake up. My eyelids are heavy and I’ve been coughing since last night. Now snot keeps dripping from my nose.

I shouldn’t have acted bold with my friends. The one whining about the cold air yesterday is folding his clothes at the edge of my bed while whistling. Fuck you!

“Argh. Blaaaaaaaaaargh.” Pipo lunges into the bathroom. His condition is worse.

“Did a plushie get you pregnant?” I shout to the guy in the bathroom.

“Fuck off. I coughed so much that I puked. I’m frustrated with myself.”

“Both of you suck.” I flip Sand off to express my gratitude.

Should I let him drive to the apartment building alone? We sometimes take turns using our cars for convenience, though we usually go together since our destination is the same. It depends on our route schedules. For example, I drive these two days and Pipo tomorrow. We’ve planned it accordingly.

We woke up early today for the morning class. At least we don't need to get dolled up for school. Even so, it's a competition to use the bathroom every day. It takes longer when Pipo comes to our room.

Pipo said his roommate was disgusting, not flushing and stuff, so he uses our bathroom often. I can only pray. I love my friends, but I can't wait to rent my own apartment and have my own toilet.

We have breakfast at the congee stall at the dormitory cafeteria before driving to the general building to attend a mandatory class. We return to our department building after ten. My life is repetitive, but the classes are never boring. There are friends to tease and have fun with.

"A...Achoo!" I sneeze again after holding it for a while. All my classmates turn to me.

"Why don't you go and die before coming back to class?" Is this how you comfort your friend, Sand?

"Fuck you."

"Just take a nap like Pipo. Your body rests while sleeping. You won't sneeze."

Right. I'm learning nothing today, changing my sleeping place from class to class.

At noon, I trudge to the cafeteria with my eyelids fluttering. I spot a lovey-dovey couple, Jet and Yeepoon, having lunch together affectionately a short distance away.

They notice me.

"Arm, come sit together."

"Ah... I'm with my friends."

“We have space. Sand and Pipo can join us.” The three of us end up sitting with the prince-princess couple.

“How’s it going? Is studying okay?” Yeepoon starts.

“Yeah. Some things are new. I need to adjust myself,” I say, instantly taking a bite. I must hurry before snot trickles down. My meal will be disgusting.

“I’ll give you my notes from earlier years. We shared some subjects.”

“Thank you.”

“P’Jet, do you keep your old notes? Can you give them to Arm?” Yeepoon asks her boyfriend.

“I gave it all to Arc. All I have left is my armpit hair and smile.”

Gross...

I never expected this from the campus prince.

“I’ll tell P’Arc for you.” I cut in upon hearing that.

“It’s okay, P’Yeepoon. Yours is enough.” Arc still hasn’t unblocked me. I can’t bring myself to get his notes. I have pride.

“All right, then. Are you sick, by the way? It looks like you’re about to sneeze several times. Your face is red.” Yeepoon points out, tilting her head. Why is she worried about her peer mentee this much?

“Just a mild fever. I ran in the rain yesterday.”

“Take care of yourself. Oh, P’Arc! Come sit with us!”

Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck! Why is the Superior Prince here? My second-year peer mentor is too friendly, waving him over. Arc smirks and spins toward our table with his three friends, carrying their dishes here.

"It's been a while. You always disappear into thin air," says Jet. Arc simply shrugs.

One senior settles next to me while the Superior Prince sits beside his peer mentor.

"It's great that you're here, Arc. Yeepoon and I were talking to Arm about the notes." Arc stares at me.

Jeez! I said I didn't need it. Damn you, Jet.

"And?"

"Do you still have the calculus notes and the others? Pass them on to him." I swallow hard. Why is he staring at me like that?

"I'll take a look."

"You can contact Arm directly. Sometimes Yeepoon and I are busy."

"He can't. He blocked me," I reveal. I've been meaning to tell them so we can vote him off our gear code.

"Again? Are you addicted to blocking people?" says Jet, shaking his head.

"A...ah, I'm not the only one he blocked?" I'm confused.

"Ugh! When he first became our peer mentee, he blocked me on LINE. And he's still a pain in the neck. Last month he used my girlfriend's face mask to mask his armpits."

Holy shit, someone like this exists?

The Superior Prince is unbothered by Jet exposing him, relishing his meal. Am I lucky or not to have met him? I planned to cut Arc off our gear code but it feels like he'll cut us off instead. Who does he think he is? I can't deal with this.

"What are you looking at?" Crap. I'm in trouble.

"Nothing."

"Do you want the notes?"

I open my mouth to answer when the fever gets to me. The sneeze is about to slip. I try my best to hold my breath.

"The fuck is wrong with you?"

"Don't tell him off, P'Arc. He's sick." Yeepooooooooon, why did you tell him!? He'll kick me to death to execute his wicked threat.

"Achooooo!" Damn it.

I drop my gaze to my plate and kick Pipo's and Sand's legs to ask for help. They do nothing but offer me an encouraging smile.

"You ran in the rain, didn't you? Serves you right." Look at him. Not a single hint of gentleness for anyone.

"It was urgent."

"You just wanted to mess with me."

"I got sick, so what?"

"Right. You're sick now. What can we do? Idiotic move."

Ouch! It feels like my heart is stabbed by a thousand knives.

"You blocked me. We shouldn't talk."

"Don't annoy me, then."

"So what if I do?"

"I'll block you for the rest of your life."

"Waaaaaaaait." This motherfucker gives no changes? He claims I annoy him as if he never annoys me. Even a fighter like me is defeated by his self-importance. Let's do it over. I pull myself together, breathing in and out. I'll talk to him nicely this time.

"Unblock me, will you?" Arc turns his handsome face from his food and locks his eyes on mine.

"What did you say?"

"Please unblock me. I'm just a freshman. You're supposed to give me a chance if I do something wrong."

"Your snot is coming out. So annoying."

He dismisses my begging and ignores me altogether. What a hurtful way to end a conversation. Daaaamn.

Arc wolfs down his food like he's been starving since his past life. Once finished, he chugs down a bottle of water and rises.

"I'm off. The freshman's face bugs me."

Arc leaves without another glance. His friends giggle and trail after him, leaving us all speechless.

Jet and Yeepoon comfort me, saying Arc is always like this and I'll get used to it soon. Hmph! As if. The only good thing about him is his face. His personality is shit.

We resume eating our lunch and split when it's time for the afternoon classes, but my second-year peer mentor runs toward me, panting.

"Arm, take this." She holds out a white bag.

"What is it?"

"Medicine."

"You don't have to be so kind to me." I'm so moved I might cry.

"I didn't buy it."

"Oh."

"It's from P'Arc."

"...!"

"He stressed that you'd be cut off if you didn't recover."

"A...Ah..."

"Take care of yourself. I gotta go to class now. See you later."

Yeepoon walks off in the opposite direction, leaving me with the bag of medicine from that guy. To be honest, I'm dumbfounded. Arc scolded the hell out of me earlier, then why...?

Why did he become nice to me?

What do I expect from Arccccccccc?

Aside from being the Superior Prince, my third-year peer mentor is fractious. I should stay away from this kind of person.

It's a fun Friday. My best friends and I plan to watch a soccer match at a bar. The team I forever stan is playing today. Liverpool FC is the best. They lost by 4-1 last time. This time will be different.

Hyped up, I post a photo of me in my team shirt on Instagram for good luck.

Armm01 *This time Liverpool will win 35 to zero for sure. I guarantee.*

You'll never walk alone.

Comments from people who root for the same team and the other floors in five minutes.

SeeOFsand *Amen.*

PipoLovinDolls *Are they playing alone to score that much?*

X_envi *Ah... whatever*

YeepoonJP *You're rooting for Liverpool? P'Arc is a fan of the other team*

Come onnnnnnnn, Yeepoon, he blocked me. Arc is mentioned despite everything. He's haunting me.

Armm01 *@YeepoonJp Tell him my team will win this time*

YeepoonJP *@Armm01 P'Arc says you should wake up because you've been in a dream too long*

Armm01 *@YeepoonJP we'll see who's dreaming*

YeepoonJP @Armm01 *P’Arc asks what you’ll give him if you lose*

Armm01 @YeepoonJP *tell him i won’t give him anything because I won’t lose*

YeepoonJP @Armm01 *ah... arm i think you should talk to P’Arc yourself. I’m tired.*

Damn it...

The conversation on instagram is over, but my LINE notification pops up. She’s no one else but the second-year engineering princess, Yeepoon. She’s not asking anything this time. It’s just a short statement.

‘P’Arc said he didn’t want to unblock you.’

End of discussion.

The soccer match took place yesterday. Tonight the Angel Gear Code will watch a movie at the cinema together. Jet will pay for all our tickets. It means I will see Arc again. I might be a bit meek this time since Liverpool FC lost by zero to three last night. I was crying at the bar.

Rrrr...!

I slip my hand into my pocket to take my beloved phone and answer the call from my peer mentor.

[Arm,] She says my name.

“P’Yeepoon, I’m waiting in front of my dorm.” She said she’d pick me up since we’re on the same way. I didn’t decline.

[P’Arc will pick you up. P’Jet and I will wait at the mall.]

Holy shit! She’s leaving me with the devil!

Speaking of the devil... Arc's car soars in the distance and pulls over at the footpath. I hang up, stride toward the third-year peer mentor, and take a deep breath to muster up confidence.

Arc is in a casual black tee, shorts and the same sandals, sitting on the driver's seat. He glares into my soul and greets me.

"Gone?" Fucking cold.

"N...No. I'm here."

"I mean your fever."

"It's gone." I open the door and settle down quietly.

"I heard your team lost." Fuck. He brought it up. Someone like Anon now has no idea what to do besides scratching his neck and replying in a sheepish voice "I have nothing to say. I got ahead of myself. Kind of embarrassed."

"You're embarrassed?"

"Losing and winning is a part of competitions. I didn't make a bet, so it wasn't stressful."

"Thirty five to zero. Hm, you sure got ahead of yourself." I'd smack his head if not for this fastened belt.

The car moves on the road while I hold my grudge inside without fighting back. Since I joined the Angel Gear Code, how many times have I fallen victim to the Superior Prince? He got me in debt, mocked me, and blocked me on all social media platforms. Even my father treated me better.

Jet has given us the exact location. I pray we arrive soon so the Superior Prince will stop messing with me. It's impossible, though. The traffic is congested, and another car tries to cut in as we inch forward. Does the impulsive Arc allow it? No!

"P'A...Arc, be careful. I'm scared," I say, digging my nails into my seat. Is he driving or flying the car?"

"I can dodge it."

Of course you can. If there's a crash, I'll die first on this side. My life hangs by a thread for some time, my heart drumming in fear of not being alive by tomorrow. Even so, my immense patience helps me get through it. We will arrive soon after this intersection.

The car before us moves forward at the green light. We should wait patiently far behind, but...

"Watch out!"

A car from another lane juts in before us, trying to force us to make some space. Fucking selfish. Still, I'm scared of dying.

"Let them get in."

"Why? Why should I oblige when they don't know how to wait?"

"We're kind Thai people."

"They cut in, like, twenty cars already. I don't care about the others but I won't have it."

"P'Arc, you're about to hit them... Fuck, hey!" I yell.

"Arm, get your phone."

“Why?”

“Be prepared to call the insurance agent.”

CRASH!!

Oh, my god...

Arc hits the car hard, followed by a clamor outside. The guy next to me remains calm as if nothing has happened and turns to ask me in an even voice “Are you hurt?”

“No. It just... startled me.”

“Okay. I’ll check on the car.” I get out to see both cars and have to wipe my sweat.

Arc’s car is slightly damaged, while the other car is completely ruined. They talk in order to settle the matter for a bit. This is my first time witnessing this side of him... Merciless!

Arc refuses to be taken advantage of. Everyone must respect road manners. If he gets cut in, he doesn’t mind wasting his time contacting the insurance agent. Who is going to pay for this? The other party, of course, since they tried to cut in.

I understand, I do. But do you have to fight for justice with me in the car, huuuuuuuuuh?

My heart freaking plummeted.

The movie is canceled. Jet and Yeepoon pick us up at the scene and the insurance agent takes Arc’s car for repair.

“You’re pale. Relax, Arm. P’Arc is always like this.” The consolation is not helpful at all. Jet is currently our driver, with the Superior Prince by his side and Yeepoon and me in the backseat. I’m grateful Jet didn’t allow Arc to touch the wheel.

"I was just surprised by the crash," I say, getting goosebumps.

"The assessment considered it minor."

Whoa, but their cars got seriously dented.

"Whatever. Everything is fine now. Arc, don't ever do this again. It's dangerous to you and Arm. Who would take responsibility if anything happened to him?" Jet shows his mature side today.

"Me." Arc replies.

"You can't take responsibility for everything. Be calmer next time."

"Okay."

"I used to be like you. When you grow older and learn to take care of someone, you'll change. Trust me. You don't want to risk them in this kind of situation."

I wish to give the oldest peer mentor a round of applause. The Superior Prince is silent.

"Enough with the serious topic. Let's eat since we're not watching the movie anymore."
The tension lifts just because the second-year peer mentor is hungry.

Jet heads to a restaurant. We spend time enjoying the food, chatting and carrying out the welcoming tradition...

"Arm, do you know you're not officially part of the Angel Gear Code, yet?" Yeepoon's question baffles me.

"What do you mean?"

“You must be accepted by all your peer mentors. Each of us has different tests. As for me, you don’t need to do anything. I accept all that you are.” The Engineering Princess’ words move me.

I still remember the marigold garland she put on me that day. Did I keep it? As if! I threw it away that day. It stank.

“You don’t have to prove yourself to me as well. You’re a little rascal as I like,” says Jet. I offer him a thankful smile.

“P’Arc, what about you?”

“I won’t accept him.” Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

Those words hurt more than being blocked. Look at him picking on the coriander in his plate without a glance at me.

“Be kind to him, Arc.”

“Why should I be?”

“Tell me what you want me to do.” The only way to deal with this guy is to confront him.

Arc turns his charming face up and narrows his eyes at me for a moment. His gaze studies me so intensely that I gulp a few times.

“What’s your best quality?” asks Arc out of the blue. I roll my eyes in contemplation and answer.

“My looks.”

“Don’t you have a mirror at your place?”

“You have bad eyesight. Don’t blame the mirror.”

“Have you ever filled a slushy more than once at the convenience store?” What’s with the question?

“S...sometimes.”

“Why did you enroll in engineering?”

“My dad forced me.”

“What are peer mentors to you?”

“Pointless but nice.”

“Your goal in the first year?”

“Get a lover. A pretty one.”

“Will you root for Man United if I say so?”

“No.”

“Juice or water?”

“Pepsi.”

“Between Facebook, IG, and LINE, if I were to unblock you on one, which would you choose?”

“LINE.”

“You’re so not my peer mentee.” Arc mumbles, putting his spoon and fork on his plate and leaning against the backrest. He tilts his head slightly, his eyes fixed on me.

“Did you want to cuss me out when I crashed the car? You can do it now.”

“I did, but no. I’m not hurt.”

“You were just lucky.”

“No. I trusted you.”

“...”

“You wouldn’t hurt me.”

Silence falls upon us. It takes a while before the guy in front of me moves. Arc places his phone on the table and slides it to me.

“On all apps.”

“What?”

“Unblock yourself.”

And that’s how Anon with no debt officially became part of the Angel Gear Code. It’s been nearly a week, but my joy lingers. Don’t worry about the crash. The Superior Prince’s family bought him a new car.

Wow, would his family buy him a new apartment if the curtains in his room fell off? How wealthy.

Yeepoon told me to take the calculus book and notes from her at noon but then said she only found the notes, thinking she had distributed all her books to her juniors in the same major. Therefore, I’m waiting in the cafeteria in front of the dormitory while she rummages through Jet’s shelves.

“Arm,” a low voice calls my name. I glance up at the newcomer.

“Oh, hey.” It’s Arc. He’s alone but already hogs all the attention. What a hot guy. I guess girls are smitten even at the sight of his leg hair. I’m jealous.

“What are you doing? Why the long face?”

“Nothing. I’m waiting for P’Yeepoon to bring her calculus book to me.”

“She’s not coming. She asked me to deliver it to you.”

“Huh!?” Arc sits opposite to me and passes the first calculus book over. I want to hate him, yet I don’t have the heart to be mad at his act of kindness.

“This one is good. Easy to understand. It includes the exercises for the exam. There are two books, though.”

“If this is the first book, where’s the second one?” I ask in perplexity.

“Finish this one first.”

“Why don’t you just give both of them to me?”

“Why should I?”

“So you won’t waste time.”

“I want to waste time.”

“ ... ”

“Tell me when you finish it. I’ll give you the second book. Bye.”

“Where are you going?”

"None of your business."

Arc has unblocked me on social media platforms, but he has never unblocked anyone in real life. You son of a bitch.

"P'Arc, the brooch ceremony is tomorrow. Will you come?" I ask, despite knowing the answer.

"Why would I? You're not getting it."

"To make fun of me."

"What for? Just pay for the brooch and you'll have it like the others. As simple as that," says Arc before leaving.

Once back in my room, I take photos of the notes and book then post them on Instagram like usual, partly to express my gratitude to my second-year peer mentor for generously bringing them to me.

Armm01: Thank you for this mountain of knowledge @YeepoonJP

PS Can anyone lend me the second book? A certain someone wouldn't give it to me.

Galarada: Is this book good? I'll review it before the exam

YeepoonJP: Anytime, my peer mentee. Wait, didn't P'Arc give you the second book?

X_envi: A senior from environmental engineering said this book is good. I'll borrow the second one for you.

FaiiKua004: I have that. Come to the female dormitory if you want it.

Arc_anol: I told you to finish the first one first

Arc saw it, huh? Aw... He left a comment right after unblocking me.

Armm01: @Arc_anol you might not keep your promise.

JittiRain: Arcccccccccc!

Arc_anol: @Armm01 come get it at my place if you're so paranoid

Armm01: @Arc_anol no. I might be stood up and get nothing.

Arc_anol: @Armm01 you'll get it. A kick in the ass, I mean

Moron! SO harsh on his peer mentee. Arc never talks to me nicely. My mind is full of dozens of curses, yet I save my response, knowing I will lose. I lock my phone screen and just go do something else.

My life as a freshman is at high speed. Each day goes by in the blink of an eye. Aside from studying, I hang out with my silly little gang at all times. Pipo regularly visits the mall to play the claw machines, and I sometimes tag along.

Sand used to be a game addict, but not anymore for some reason. I assume he's dating someone.

I want a girlfriend as well. I keep to myself right now because I still don't have a crush on anyone. I'll make a move once my heart flutters for someone.

"Please line up to receive your brooches," announces a second-year staff member.

I exhale a sigh, watching the ceremony in a gloomy mood as I didn't pass. It's my fault for skipping the cheering activity. At least I have my friends with the same fate to comfort each other, but...

“Hey, my peer mentor will treat me to dinner to cheer me up. Same goes for Sand. Will you join us?” It feels like I got struck by thunder. My friends missed the cheering activity, yet their peer mentors adorably offered to treat them to a meal as consolation. What about me? Yeepoon must be with Jet without thinking about me right now.

“No, thanks. I’ll go back to our dorm.”

“Can you stay alone?”

“Don’t make it a big deal, Po. Just go.” I wave them off.

“Okay. Call us if you need anything.”

I nod as I check my watch. It’s past five. I’ll stop by the student association to buy a brooch before returning to the dormitory. I can buy it myself without ceremony.

The brooch is a hundred and twenty baht. It’s mine after I joined the cheering activity three times. Worth it, I would say. The thought puts me at ease. I walk along the path while playing on my phone until a senior greets me.

“Hey, I’m a photographer of the Engineer Cute Boy page. Can I take some photos of you for the page?”

“Ah...” He looks familiar.

I think for a moment and recall we met on the interview day. Yeepoon said we’re the only admins of the page. I presume the photographer is one of her crew with a different job.

We’ve never introduced ourselves to each other as the staff members of the page since I asked Yeepoon to conceal my identity. I guess that’s why he wants my photos for the second time.

“Please. To keep the page active.”

“Actually...” I don’t want my photos posted on the page, but I can’t reject him.

“Please help me out. Just a few. One pic.”

“Very well.”

That’s it. Twelve shots. Is that what he meant by one pic? Fuuuck.

After the photographer leaves, I march to the parking lot, unable to believe I’ll stumble across my third-year peer mentor again within two days. The chances are super rare. I usually see him once a week, if not for the meals with the other peer mentors.

Arc isn’t alone, tagged along by his group of friends. He’s already a pain in the ass, but with his friends, they look like an army of impertinent guys.

The Superior Prince has a ton of friends, but there are these three dudes joined at the hip with him. Arc hasn’t introduced them to me.

There’s an insanely striking nerdy looking guy with glasses, a guy with an outstanding gangster vibe and an extremely charismatic guy, looking rich even without the word rich on his forehead. I want him to be my peer mentor, confident he would’ve taken good care of me.

Not rich but unapproachable like someone.

“Arm, there’s a soccer match today,” says the gangster looking dude. I quickly decline.

“No.” I haven’t paid off my debt. A lesson learned.

“What the hell? I was going to ask which team you’re rooting for.”

“What teams are playing?”

“Bayern Munich and Dortmund.”

“Dortmund.”

“Okay. Let’s bet on Bayern Munich. Arm called it.”

Fuck you...

It occurred to me who Arc got his cheekiness from. They are definitely friends.

“Where are you going?” Asks the tall guy out of the blue. Arc doesn’t repeat himself, letting me think of my answer.

“Well... I’m going back to my dorm.”

“There was the brooch ceremony today.”

“Yeah, I didn’t get it, and P’Yeepoon must be with P’Jet.”

“Where’s your brooch?” Asks Arc.

“Huh?”

“Where is it? Hand it over.”

I take the brooch out of my pocket. Arc unseals the plastic wrap and, in my confusion, yanks my tie. I almost bump into him.

“The hell are you doing?”

“I’ll put it on for you.” He pins the brooch on the center of my tie with care... How gentle of him.

“Done. No ceremony needed.”

“Ah... thank you...”

“You’re welcome. Bye.” He’s off again shortly after we’ve crossed paths.

Not holding back, I watch the group of tall guys walk to the other side of the department building. I divert my gaze to observe my peer mentor’s hard work emotionally.

Gosh~~~~

It’s not even in the center, asshole.

I return to my room and sink into my bed before checking my phone. The flood of notifications annoys the hell out of me. As it turns out, they’re from the Engineer Cute Boy page.

Yeepoon worked at the speed of light. The photographer took my photos around an hour ago, and it was posted already. The feedback is pretty great, considering the two thousand likes. The number of shares isn’t ugly either.

I read the comments for a while, and the positive messages cheer me up. I jump to my desk and turn on my laptop to view all comments more conveniently. As I thought, the page displays the admin who posted the photo: Yeepoon’s facebook account.

The page admins can see each other since we’ve stopped adding our abbreviations when posting. I read the comments for a while before I receive a direct message. I check it in curiosity, expecting, deep down, it will be something like, ‘I like Arm so much. Please post more photos of him.’ But...

Anol Paraminphisan

That bastard!! Why is it him? I blink repeatedly to make sure it’s really him. I’m not dreaming, apparently.

Anol Pramiphisan

Hey

Short and brief, just like that. I will not dismiss that, wondering what a jaded person like him has to say. The page didn't use his photo to hype it up like before, after all.

Engineer Cute Boy

Is something wrong?

In one minute, someone's photo is sent into the chat box. That person is no one else but me.

Anol Paramiphisan

Delete this.

Engineer Cute Boy

Why? I asked for his permission.

It shouldn't be a problem

Anol Paramiphisan

I'm Arm's peer mentor

I'll talk it out with him.

But please delete the photo

Engineer Cute Boy

Do you have any more reasonable reasons?

I'm confused. Why is he so upset? This is my photo, not his.

Anol Paraminphisan

This boy isn't a public treasure.

He's my peer mentee

I'm protective of my person

I'm protective of my person.

I'm protective of my person!

I'm protective of my person!!

Uggggh! He's so cringy that I wince. I'm at a loss for words, my hands are somehow shaking. In the moment of my stupefaction, Arc keeps sending messages.

Anol Paraminphisan

Delete it now.

Delete it now.

Delete it now.

Delete it now.

Delete it now.

Delete it now.

Engineer Cute Boy

Okay, okay

I'll delete it now

Why are you so protective of him?

Anol Paraminphisan

None of your fucking business

Fuck you!

If you're even protective of your peer mentee, how the fuck will I find myself a girlfriend?
Tell me!! Breathe in and out, in and out, saddhu...

Chapter 4

Go All Out and Stop at You

After deleting my photo, I quickly call the other admin, my second-year peer mentor. I tell her everything and learn that Arc can't possibly know the admins are part of the Angel Gear code. Yeepoon and I decide to keep it a secret like nothing has ever happened. If Arc ever finds out, I'll be the first body thrown in the water. The thought sends me chills, but the grip on my phone remains firm.

"Let me ask you something. Is the Angel Gear Code not allowed to be posted on public pages?"

[I don't think so. I post P'Jet's photos all the time] Yeepoon replies immediately.

"Then why does P'Arc not want my photos posted? If it's about the criticism, that's my concern." I wish to know his reason, but I'm also afraid to be yelled at if I ask him.

[Perhaps it's because you're a freshman. P'Arc might indulge when you're older.]

“I hope so. He’s acting like my dad right now.”

[Are you free tomorrow, by the way? P’Jet wants to make up for the movie night cancellation last time. He’ll also treat you to a meal since you didn’t get the department brooch.]

“I also didn’t get the department gear,” my voice trails off, nearly disappearing.

Fortunately, the university and the department, including many groups of seniors, aren’t strict with welcoming activities. If you participate, you gain new life experiences. If you prefer doing something else, like playing games at the dorms, that’s fine too. And that’s great. I love it.

[It’s okay. You can be cool without the gear.]

“How did you feel when you received your gear? Were you excited?” I grab the chance to ask the experienced one.

[I cried that day.]

“Was it that emotional?”

[No. P’Arc didn’t show up so P’Jet gave it to me instead.]

Ughhhhhh, what a piece of shit. Fucking moron.

“I can imagine.”

[Well, you can’t force the Superior Prince.]

We chat a little bit more before hanging up.

I continue my daily life as an engineering student in the morning. I study, have lunch, and clear my evening schedule for my peer mentors. In fact, I spend a lot of time with my peer

mentors to the point where my best friends, Pipo and Sand, are on the verge of cutting me out of our silly gang.

“Let’s go together today. Did you tell your friends?”

Yeepoon asks the question, walking ahead of me. I trail after her like a puppy wanting a snack.

“I did.”

The Angel Gear Code is such a loving group. We canceled our movie date due to the accident, and the fourth year and second-year peer mentors still tried to make up for it.

“Okay. They won’t be worried if you come back late that way.”

“Okay... Is P’Arc coming?”

“He didn’t confirm anything, he said he’d practice soccer after classes. I’m not sure if he’ll come.”

“He could’ve just told us straightforwardly,” I mutter.

“Don’t expect much from the Superior Prince. I was thrilled to have him as my peer mentor and realized a while later that I was wrong,” says Yeepoon, laughing.

She’s correct. Even I, his second peer mentee, am driven up the wall every day.

Arc left a bomb on the page inbox yesterday, startling Yeepoon and me. Even though he’s not aware of the admins’ true identities, the sight of him makes us paranoid.

“Let’s wait for P’Jet here. He texted me that he’d be here in five minutes.”

“Oh, he’s not at the department building?”

“He had classes at the general building today.”

I nod. We stop at the footpath in front of the engineering building, waiting for the fourth year peer mentor to pick us up. We chat about typical things in our lives but mostly about Anol, the god of fire.

Jet’s car pulls over five minutes later. The princess Yeepoon sits shotgun while I settle in the backseat with sad eyes. I’m so single. I hope to have a girlfriend to make my heart flutter, but it’s not that simple.

My third-year peer mentor even interfered with my photo on the page. The door I opened for girls was slammed shut against my will.

The distance between the university and the mall is short. Once we’ve arrived, Jet and Yeepoon walk together hand in hand, leaving the freshman with a gloomy heart watching them from behind. They stop by multiple shops before turning to me.

“Let’s eat first. What do you feel like eating, Arm?”

“Anything.”

“What about shabu shabu? It’s filling,” Jet suggests. I nod without arguing.

We’re foodies. We need food whenever we hang out, we focus on the dishes right after we get a table. Yeepoon took care of me well at first, asking if I wanted this or that. Now? The couple happily feed each other, forgetting their peer mentee over here.

I’m forced to watch them being lovey dovey for almost two hours before we go buy the movie tickets and wait for the showtime. I didn’t expect to hear something crazy from Jet.

“I just read Arc’s text. He’ll be watching the movie with us.” My eyes widen. The haunting ghost is haunting meeeeeeeeeee.

“W...why? Isn't he practicing soccer?” I can't help but ask, scared of getting kicked by the Superior Prince.

“He's done, I guess.”

“It usually takes quite long.”

“I don't know. You can ask him.”

I gulp several times. The comedy movie we're going to watch doesn't sound amusing anymore at the thought of the Superior Prince being on his way here. Arc will mess with me again for sure.

“There he is. Mr. Rungson.” Jet waves at Arc. The tall figure in a tee and shorts walks toward our spot with a straight face amid the stares from other students in front of the cinemas. What a hot guy... I'm jealous and nothing else.

“You're mocking my dad's name now?” asks Arc in a monotone voice.

“Sorry. It slipped.”

“The hell are you looking at? Want a kick?” See!? He's already messing with me.

“P'Arc, come sit. Leave Arm alone. I feel bad for him.” The only girl in the group separates us knowingly.

The tall guy sits beside me. The fourth year peer mentor soon starts. “Why didn't you tell us you'd come?”

“It wouldn't be a surprise.” What a shitty answer.

“Didn't you have practice?”

"I did. I left first because I love my gear code so much."

"Damn liar. You never cared about this gear code stuff. Don't forget you hardly ever joined our meals last year. Why do you suddenly care?"

"There's a troublemaker in our gear code now. I feel the need to discipline him."

Getting mentioned, I straighten up and retaliate. "I'm not a troublemaker. Just admit you're jealous that another good looking person joined the group."

"Hmm!" Ouch. His chuckle hurts more than two pages of cursing words.

"Don't underestimate him, P'Arc. He was asked twice to have his photos posted on the department fan page," says Yeepoon with a proud smile. Arc feels the opposite.

Shit! He glowers at me like he's about to rip my head off.

"Who asked you?" asks Arc.

"A senior."

"Who is it?"

"I... I don't know. Why are you asking me? Besides, my photo got deleted."

"Oh, why did they delete it, though? I was confused. I was going to share it to my timeline to make my friends jealous," Jet interrupts. Yeepoon and I exchange awkward glances since we've never revealed our secret to anyone.

"I assume someone requested them to delete it. It doesn't matter, right? Next time..."

Yeepoon glances at the Superior Prince with her big, round eyes and resumes, "We can send Arm's photo to the admin to post again."

“It’s better without his photo. It’ll ruin the image of the page.”

Woooooow, you underestimate me, Arc. There’s zero gentleness in his heart. He’s not thoughtful of me, his peer mentee, at all.

Now I know his real reason. He didn’t protect me from the criticism, but he was worried about the image of the angel gear code. All right~~ Jet is the campus prince. Arc is the Superior Prince. Yeepoon is the engineering princess. What am I...?

The more I think, the more resentful I get. Seeing no point in arguing, I excuse myself.

“I’ll go buy another ticket and some popcorn.”

“Don’t bother. I’ll do it. Go wherever you want.”

I purse my lips at Arc. He never talks to me nicely.

“Let’s split up, then. The movie will start soon,” says the oldest guy. We’re on our own way. I’m getting snacks while the other three head to the restroom without waiting for me. We reunite as we walk into the dark theater.

“G9.” I mumble, edging along to find my seat.

How annoying. Why do I have to sit next to Arc? Yeepoon is so far away from me.

“Sit. Or should I cut the ribbon first?”

“Did someone provoke you? Why are you so angry?”

“If I’m angry, you’ll be the first to deal with it.” Waaaah, why is he so fucking mean?

I sit next to the tall guy, place the cup in the armrest, and hug the bucket of popcorn. I hope the movie starts soon because Jet and Yeepoon are already in their own world. And me? I'm in hell.

The movie begins after the twenty minute long advertisements. We're all in silence, save for the sound of the movie echoing across the theater. I enjoy the story, scooping the popcorn with my hand out of habit.

"You're chewing loud," the tall guy whispers in my ear.

I turn to see his handsome side profile for a moment and lower my chewing noise. It still bothers Arc since he now glares at me. I switch from chewing to holding the popcorn in my mouth until it melts. Breathe in and out, in and out...

Each bite takes so much effort that I wipe my sweat. Noticing my abnormal behavior, Arc seizes my hand, preventing me from eating the popcorn. He takes the bucket away with his other hand like a dictator.

"Hey, it's mine!"

"If it's troublesome, don't eat it."

Ughhhhh, but I like it. Why does he have to hurt my feelings this much? And the grip isn't even gentle. My bones might break from the squeeze. I can't concentrate on the movie at all. For two hours and fifteen minutes, I sacrificed one hand to the third-year peer mentor to control my need for popcorn. Are you insane, Arc!!!!!!!!!!!!!!?

I exit the theater sulky in the other two peer mentors' puzzlement. Meanwhile, the culprit walks joyfully with his hands in his pockets, unabashed.

"What's wrong, Arm? You didn't like the movie?" asks Yeepoon finally.

“No. I just wanted to eat popcorn.”

“Oh, why didn’t you? You bought it before the movie started.”

“P’Arc wouldn’t let me,” I snitch. As the youngest, I have the right to rat him out.

The Superior Prince, flustered, quickly explains. “When did I say you couldn’t? I just wanted you to chew softly.”

“I did. It didn’t taste good that way.”

“You were holding it in your mouth.” Did he notice that? His nosiness works even in the dark. I’m frightened~~~

“That’s what I mean. You stopped me.”

“You looked tired of holding it in your mouth, so I gave you a solution. Wasn’t it nice?”

“No. I wanted to eat. That’s what I wanted.”

“I’ll buy you a new one. How many buckets?”

“It’s not the same. Popcorn tastes good during movies.”

“When are you free, then?”

“W...what?” My voice softens. To be honest, he confuses me greatly.

“When are you free?”

“Why do you ask?”

“Let’s watch a movie together.”

“...!”

"You can get as many buckets of popcorn as you wish. I'll book opera seats. Deal?"

"D...deal."

"Let's go home."

I turn to the flabbergasted couple and offer them a meek smile. I'm not the only one not used to Arc's temper. No one in this world is used to it.

"Engineer first-year students, this wayyy."

"Come here and get in line."

The sophomores shout in the megaphones in the hall of the department building amid the bustling of hundreds of wild boys playing and shouting. We were requested to gather after class without notice.

I sit with Sand and Pipo. We're sharing pictures of girls from other departments before the seniors confiscate our phones as they can't control the situation. By the time everything is in order, it's past five. We'll be dismissed late again.

I wanted ice cream. Bummer.

"You're here today because we'd like to inform you of an important activity next week: Sports day. Everyone must participate"

"Ugh, what the hell? Ugh!!" The students yell over the megaphones for some time before quietning.

"It's the reputation of the engineering department. We've been the winner for generations. All the expectations are on you now."

"The other years can handle the expectations. The freshmen are exhausted."

"Yessssss!" Daaaaamn, Theme, the Engineering Prince, has stepped up. He must really be exhausted since the Prince-and-Princess contest ended just recently. Now it's Sports Day."

"Don't complain, Theme. You have the image of the Engineering Prince to maintain."

"Not anymore. The contest is over."

"Somebody shut him up. Luckily, the Prince and Princess don't have to do much. You just need to join the parade. Regardless of that, there are tons of duties for the rest of you. We'll introduce the heads of each team to you. Let's start with the cheerleaders."

"Woohoo!!"

I yawn while listening, understanding that they will select first-year cheerleaders first since there's a competition between departments every year.

The heads of the other teams introduce themselves one by one. The captain of the basketball team, the leader of the table tennis team, and the members of the swim club. Their speeches sound like drowsy prayers until someone shows up.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" The sudden and continuous scream turns my attention to the target. The tall, fair-skinned guy with a familiar, charming face stands at the front.

"I'm from the engineering soccer team. We need multiple new members this year."

"Can girls join the team, P'Arccccccc?"

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

"I'm sick of freshmen. Bye."

"P'Arc, waaaaaaait!" The sophomores and seniors lunge toward the Superior Prince. His patience is insanely low. He's going to leave after a few teases. If you could block people in real life, I bet he'd block all freshmen.

"He's my idol," Sand whispers.

I snarl. "Why? He's a pain in the ass."

"You don't understand artistic guys."

I slap my forehead. Can't my friend differentiate these phrases?

"Anything else, P'Arc?" I ignore my best friend and turn to the guy at the front.

"Well...you can apply if you're interested. The members have set the table at the back."

Arc sweeps his eyes around until he meets my gaze.

Ta-da!!

"What's Arm's duty?" What? Why did you mention meeeeeee?

I get goosebumps after his deadpan question to the sophomores.

"Arm doesn't have a duty right now. The cheerleaders have selected him, though."

"Can you cancel it?"

"Pardon?"

"Arm has a duty. He'll take care of the soccer player." I'm relieved since I don't want to be a cheerleader.

"Sure. You mean the soccer team, right?"

The tall guy shakes his head.

"Just his peer mentor."

"Kyaaaaaaaa, I'm jealous of his peer mentee. Boohoo."

Don't be jealous of the boy with no debt, everyone...

Arc is a fucking dictator. He's the most extreme part of my life. If he ever lowers his guard, I'll call Mr. Rungson to discipline his son.

Being assigned with the significant mission, I'm determined to fulfill my duty by stopping by the soccer field after classes every day to take care of the Superior Prince with all my might.

But...Arc never shows up.

He's still an invisible man until the last second. We meet again when the first match between the engineering and science departments begins.

This match is like a warmup. We occupy the grandstand fully, along with the cheering team of the other team and Arc's fans with huge signs of his name.

Arc looks cool today, to be frank. I can't take my eyes off him even as the team is warming up. I wish I was this popular. My mother would've been proud and boasted about me to her boss for decades.

"What the fuck are you doing here, Arm? Get down there and give them water." Pipo's voice diverts my attention from the soccer field to him.

Sand and Pipo are part of the cheering team on the grandstand. They simply have to chant, clap, and cheer for the soccer team during the match.

"No. A lot of people are taking care of him." Look at the students beside the field handing out water bottles like haunting ghosts. Accepting none of those, Arc approaches the stand and gazes up.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa, P'Arc!"

"Is that P'Arc from engineering? Who is he looking for? Who?"

"Could it be me? Awwwww >///<"

Arc waves his hands briefly. I wonder who he's waving at, but when I look around and no one responds to him, I point at myself. Arc nods.

"Come here."

"Who is he talking to?"

I knew it. Unable to reject him, I squeeze through the crowd down there as people stare at me from head to toe.

"Oh, it's Arm, his peer mentee."

"What a relief." Everyone sighs and smiles again.

It must be nice to be the Superior Prince, a public figure. He doesn't have to be interested or care about someone specifically, yet everyone treats him fucking well.

As soon as my feet touch the ground, I immediately ask the tall guy in an engineering crimson soccer shirt. I hate the print on the back of his shirt. The other team displays their names for girls to remember, but as for him...

A massive 'Bang-on Pochana.' He must admire this sponsor dearly.

"Why did you call me down here?"

"I'm thirsty."

"Gah! So many people are trying to give you water. Why don't you accept it?"

"I don't want water from others."

"You want mine?"

"Yeah. Give it." Arc waggles his finger. I pass him a half-full water bottle, and he twists the lid off and chugs it down amid the chatting noises all over the area.

"Can I go back up when the match starts?"

"Sure. But you must be here when I come back."

"Then I'll have to go back and forth." I thought my duty was comfortable. I don't want to feel awkward sitting beside the field since I'm unfamiliar with the other soccer players.

"Are you an idiot? You can just sit beside the field throughout the match."

Ouch! My 2036514035th nerve hurts.

"Yeah. How can I go anywhere else when you put it like that?" I glance at the vast soccer field once the whistle goes off as the signal that the warmup is over. "Do you need anything? You will be tired after the match. I'll go get it."

"I want a clownfish in a glass jar."

A clownfish, my ass!

"Not funny."

"A blessing, then."

"I hope you lose."

"I'll definitely win. You always root for the losing teams."

"Fuck you."

"What will I get if I win?" There he is, making bets without fail.

"I'll pay off my debt."

"I'll block you." Arc rocks my head.

"What the hell? You should be happy that I'll repay you."

"You're talking too much. It's annoying."

"Ah, if you win, just tell me what you want. I'll do whatever I can." Even if my bank account is as empty as my brain.

"You said it."

"Yeah."

And the movements of Arc, the Superior Prince, become the talk of the town.

Not because his kick was flawless and genius. Arc ran, tripped on the other team's player's leg, and fell onto the ground, startling the spectators into a stir. Some even whipped out the books of prayers to chant for him.

What about me? Ha! I watched him quietly and took some photos as a keepsake.

He freaking sucks. Haha.

Despite the fall, the first match ends with the engineering team winning by 3-2. The players are exhilarated, but the Superior Prince's fans are heartbroken because of the nasty wound on my peer mentor's knee.

The tall guy is supported to the sideline, and the first aid team charges forward to the rescue. They're incredibly determined to treat Arc's rough knee. I observe him from afar, unable to squeeze in.

"Does it hurt, P'Arc? Don't flock around him."

"It's okay. Just a wound on the knee."

Even so, he staggers pitifully. I lock my eyes on his every move.

"Should we clean the wound?"

"Someone did."

"No, Arc. You're still bleeding. Let's clean it."

"It's okay. Thanks a lot, guys." I listen to the argument of the hurt guy and the volunteers. Arc then totters from the crowd toward me with that aggravating smirk. Is he Captain America? Tough, strong, and sturdy.

"Treat my wound," says Arc plainly.

"Why are you bothering your peer mentee?" The first aid team and dozens of his fans are staring from over there, yet he's playing hard to get. Now the buck is inevitably passed to me.

"I want to bother my peer mentee. Got a problem?"

"I'm not good at this."

"Of course, you're not. You study engineering. Just do it." Arc wobbles to the camp bed by the sideline before everyone moves aside for me to fulfill my job as the Superior Prince's servant.

"Hurry up. It fucking hurts." You sound like a liar!

"You didn't complain when you walked over."

"It didn't hurt then. It does now."

"Let me have a look."

I inch closer and study the shallow wound: just a scrape with excessive bleeding. I apply some ointment on it and plaster a bandage.

"Lucky for you, I'm skilled. You could've had to cut off your leg."

"You brat," Arc lowers his voice, ruffling my hair into a tangled mess. I wonder why he loves playing with my head.

"Done. Go celebrate the victory with your friends." His gang is devouring the layered coconut sweets. I suppose they hope to celebrate with him.

"Yeah. Thank you."

"Leave it there," I joke.

"Leave it where? In your heart?"

"..."

"I don't think I can. It's a mess in there."

"Fuck the hell off."

I swear and flip off my peer mentor like crazy, but Arc is unabashed. Whistling, he joins his friends and enjoys the layered coconut sweets to celebrate the victory of the first match.

He teased me even after I treated his wound. Who would understand my feelings?
Boohoooooooo.

After clearing the field, attending a meeting, and setting the schedule, I return to the dormitory at eight. I'm now in my private place to scroll down social apps infinitely. Needless to say, the first app I check is Instagram.

Nothing is interesting on the timeline except for the Superior Prince. The number of his followers is low, but those 220 people seem to have gathered in his comment section.

Arc just posted a photo of the bandage on his knee. Why is everyone excited?

Arc_anol *The person who did this wasn't gentle at all.*

He scolded me again. This moron.

Look at the comments.

WiewyVipa: P'Arc, *who did that?*

Fhon0071: *Isn't the one on the sideline Nong Arm? He's cute.*

Arc_anol: @Fhon0071 *How is he cute? Did you look at him with your ankles?*

Golf_Anupong: *Are you officially dating? I'm fucking curious.*

Paapang: *My heart hurts. It hurts in my chest.*

Fhon0071: @Arc_anol *Why did you rag him? Want a beating, Arc?*

GinaGina: *I didn't watch the match today. Why is my darling hurt? Who treated your wound, babe? Boohoo.*

Seemingly, many have no idea I treated Arc's wound. Unwilling to break anyone's heart with the misunderstanding about Arc dating someone, I leave a comment.

Armm01: @Fhon0071 *Thank you for saying I'm cute. PS I'm single.*

PS 2 I treated his wound, not a girlfriend.

A new notification chimes.

Arc_anol: @Armm01 *This is my account, not a place for you to announce your singleness.*

Armm01: @Arc_anol *Why? I can do anything because I'm handsome. @Fhon0071 If you have cute friends, you can introduce them to me.*

Arc_anol: @Armm01 *Are you looking for trouble?*

Armm01: @Arc_anol *I'm not. Define trouble.*

It's a blast provoking my peer mentor.

I think of something witty to talk to a senior via Arc's account and choose the best one to type down.

But...

DAMN YOU, ARC!

"Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!"

Why did he block me agaaaaaaaain? I don't understaaaaaaaaaand.

"This song is for those who have been hurt over and over. Sing along if you can."

That's me. I got hurt just a week ago. That you-know-who still hasn't unblocked me.

"Your life is hurt but not ruined..."

It's over. My third-year peer mentor destroyed everything. How many times have I experienced this?

"Today your heart is broken. Remind yourself to stand tall no matter what."

Of course, I'll get through this despite being blocked. It's a trivial matter.

"The deceitful love is painful and worthless...Don't let it ruin your life~"

"Say that again!" I shout aloud and get smacked in the head by my shitty friend.

"What the fuck is wrong with you? Are you possessed?" asks Pipo in perplexity.

We're at Bang-on Pochana, the famous bar in the deep alley in Southeast Asia. I fell in love with the relaxing vibe of the bar after visiting it with Arc last time, so I invited nearly a dozen engineering friends to hang out here to our hearts' content.

We're all stressed about studying and half-complete Sports Day. Not to mention my headache over being blocked for the millionth time. Therefore, we'll vent it all tonight at this bar.

"Hey, order anything you want."

"Is it your treat, Pleum?"

"No. I'm just saying. We'll split the bill."

"Fuck off."

"You suck, Pleum. It's my treat. Here you go, two bottles of forty degrees rice whiskey."

What a man of good taste. I'm impressed.

"Cheers."

"Chug it all down. You can always have more."

We enjoy the booze and atmosphere to the point we lose track of time. Before I know it, the bar is almost closed. I sit at the table with glazed eyes. Some of us are still dancing with girls. Some pissed their pants. Some are knocked out. It feels like we're switching our sleeping places.

Pipo then screams like the world is crumbling. Sand darts inside and yanks me up on my feet.

"Arm, let's go and help Guy."

"What? What happened?"

"He was getting his ass beaten. Come on! Go!"

The world suddenly becomes clear. I stagger out the back of the bar with my friends to find Guy in a terrible state.

"Why did you do this? I'll call the police," says someone. A senior snatches his shirt collar and punches his face.

Fuck!

"Your friend started it."

"You could've talked it out," I interrupt. The senior glares at me.

"I did. I tried to stop him, but he kept flirting with my girlfriend. This is not even enough."

Shit! A plot twist. My friend is wrong.

"Would it have gotten to this point if your girlfriend hadn't played along?" shouts the foul-mouthed Nut.

"You motherfucker."

BAM!!

Holy shit. Friendship is more important than the truth at this moment. Before my brain processes everything, our group of electrical engineering students attack those seniors without thinking.

The commotion reverberates in all directions. Full-on chaos. Even I'm at a loss for what to do except to separate my friends from the battle. I underestimated my misfortune.

CRACK!

My head is heavy, my blurry vision blurring even more, when something smashes my head. I wobble and fall onto the ground with no one catching me. As expected, nobody is in the state to help anyone.

"Arm! Hey, Arm!" I hear the ringing in my ears along with someone's voice calling my name, yet my eyelids slide shut.

Bang-on Pochana.

To the atmosphere and our amiable friendship.

"He's awake."

I squint at the bright fluorescent light on the ceiling. It takes me a few moments to adjust my eyes and my temples throb. I wince before lifting my hand to touch my head, but someone grabs it with his large hand.

"Don't touch your head."

"P'A..Arc?" I recognize his voice without even seeing him. Who wouldn't remember the person who blocks you regularly on Instagram?

"Good thing you survived. I almost called a monk to chant the prayers."

I attempt to recall my memory, not bickering back. Before I blacked out, I was at the back of the bar and fought with a group of seniors, then I woke up here. The ambiance and the smell of disinfectant make me realize...

"Did you take me to the hospital?"

"No. This is hell."

Arc messes with me even when I'm injured.

He helps me sit up. All my peer mentors are here. My friends are gone.

"What happened?"

"This is what happened. Arc's friend spotted you and your friends fighting with the seniors, jumped in to settle the fight, and noticed you and your friends getting injured. Arc rushed to the bar and brought you all to the hospital," explains Yeepoon. Some things remain unclear, though.

"W...What about my friends?"

"P'Arc sent Po and Sand home. The others with minor injuries were treated and left. The one who got beaten up is in the recovery room."

"What about the seniors that hurt me and my friends?"

"At the police station. Your friend also has to pay the penalty once he's recovered."

I nearly put my palm over my face. But when I turn to the brutal Superior Prince, it looks like he's furious with me. I don't know what else to do except...

"Sorry."

"You know what you did wrong?" Arc is just like my father. Unbothered to argue, I admit it.

"Yeah."

"Clarify."

"I went to the bar and caused trouble with my friends."

"You deserved the wound on your head. Don't ever go there if you can't take care of yourself. If anything fucking happens, run and ask for help. Don't get yourself involved. Who will take responsibility if anything happens to you? What a damn idiot." Wow, this is like a lecture from the parallel universe, so lengthy that I dread reflecting on it.

"I know I did wrong...if you're still mad, go on and tell me off. Don't hold back."

Arc fixes his eyes on me in silence. I glance up at him hesitantly.

"You're a naughty one, aren't you?"

"Is that an insult?"

"Yes, it is. Note it. Feeling better now?"

"Yeah."

"The doctor said you could leave when you woke up."

"Can you give me a ride?" My voice trails off in guilt.

"You're not going back to your dorm tonight. Stay over at my place."

"Huh?"

"Don't you understand? The security guard would notice your injury and get suspicious. Stay over at my place and see what we'll do tomorrow."

"I agree. Crash at his place tonight," Jet supports. I turn to Yeepoon for her opinion. She simply gives me a sheepish smile.

"But I want to settle the fight at the bar with Sand and Po."

"Leave that for tomorrow. You're going to my place tonight."

"What's at your place? Why should I go there?"

"The second calculus book. Don't you want it?"

"My engineering friends have it. I can borrow one of them."

"You can borrow them, but I'll give mine for free. Don't make me repeat myself!"

In the end, I drag my fragile body after the tall guy to his apartment.

Honestly, I'd had enough of Arc's driving since the last time. This time wasn't as terrifying, to my surprise, since he drove slower and appeared calmer.

It's not out of worry for me. I suppose Arc doesn't wish to be scolded again by Jet.

"Come in."

This is my first time setting foot in the Superior Prince's apartment. This place is spacious with perfect usable areas, yet he barely owns anything but shoes and books on the shelves. I understand the single man's lifestyle. Instead of a messy room, it's nearly empty.

"Go take a shower and don't get your wound wet. Here's your towel." Arc tosses a towel at me in a not-so-gentle way and throws some clothes over a second later.

"No underwear?"

"None is your size. Just don't wear it."

"I can't do that."

"Do I need to cuss you out again?" I shut my mouth right away.

I spend a long time taking care of my business, my head still throbbing. The sight of myself in the mirror is even more pathetic. Why did I stand still stupidly like an easy target to get my head smashed with a beer bottle? It fucking hurts.

Arc uses the bathroom immediately after me. He showers quickly and sends me to bed with a painkiller.

"I saw the second calculus book. It's over there, isn't it?" I point at a shelf. Arc rubs his hair with a towel for a moment, fetches the thick book on the shelf, and hands it to me.

"Here it is."

"Thank you."

"Put it on the nightstand and get some sleep."

"Okay." I don't follow his words right away. I skim the book and close it as the tall guy gets clothed and climbs onto the bed. We lie down on the opposite edges of the bed, leaving a lonely, wide gap between us.

The light is turned off and darkness engulfs the room. Instead of sleeping, I have heaps of things on my mind to voice out.

"It would've been awful had you not been there." Silence envelopes us before he replies in a low voice.

"My friend took care of everything by the time I got there."

"Still, thank you."

"I'll get back at anyone who hurts you. No worries." I feel the seriousness in his voice.

"How brutal. I'm lucky to be in the Angel Gear Code."

"Arm."

"Hmm..?"

"You said you'd do whatever I wanted if I won the match."

"You're bringing it up when I'm hurt?"

"Yeah."

"What do you want? Can it be something cheap? I won't have money to buy food."

"You don't need to pay for it."

"..."

"Just be safe."

My heart is filled with something invisible. Besides my family, no one has ever expressed such worry for me. The fierce Superior Prince cares about his peer mentee quite a lot. I'm fucking proud.

"I'll be fine. I'm invincible."

"I hope so. Go to sleep so you have the energy to be jailed tomorrow."

"Fuck you."

I flip on my side and watch the tall guy's back before closing my eyes. My brain still isn't asleep as something bugs me. I need an answer now.

"Hey, does the second calculus book belong to someone else?"

"What?" asks Arc in a muffled voice.

"I took a look and saw a note on the first page."

"Well, yeah."

"No, no. It's a note you wrote for someone."

"The 'Anol's person'?"

"Yeah."

"Yeah."

"Yeah what?"

"I'm sleepy."

"Answer the question first."

Not receiving the answer, I give up. I don't care anymore. But when I don't want to hear it, Arc whispers in the silence as I'm uncertain if this is reality or a dream.

"I wrote it for you."

Chapter 5

Happy Arc's day

It's my first morning in years waking up with a twinge of pain in the head to the point I don't want to open my eyes. I only wish to lie still without moving, yet I'm not permitted. My best friend called me countless times from the male dormitory before dawn. I had no choice but to abandon the joy of the soft bed and wake up early.

"You have morning classes?" Arc cranes his neck out of the bathroom. I sit on the bed in dizziness, processing the question.

"My first two periods are free. I have class at ten."

"Take a shower, then."

"Can I shower at my dorm? My uniform is there. Yours would be..." I pause and continue, "No fit."

"Of course. You're fucking short."

"Yes, I am. Whatever."

"Are you sulky? That's not adorable. Go take a shower and wear my tee. I can't give you a ride when you're stinky like this. My nose can't stand it."

Ughhhhhhhhhh, now he can't take it? I never complained when I sat shotgun in his car after soccer practice. Had he not helped me at the bar last night, I wouldn't have stayed quiet.

Arc steps out of the bathroom and marches to the closet to get me a new towel, and I enter the bathroom without a choice. By the time I'm finished, he has prepared breakfast on the table.

"Hey, your shower cream smells so good. The shampoo is also nice." My head hurt so much last night that my senses malfunctioned. I forgot to tell him this.

Arc narrows his eyes at me and remains silent until I explain.

"Can I shower here often?"

"I'll move out. Annoying."

"The neighbors are annoying?"

"You're annoying." Fuck, he's so possessive of his private place. I change the subject, unable to argue.

"What did you make? Smells great."

"Don't you have eyes to see for yourself?" You bastard. I shouldn't have said that.

Considering his unruly image, who would've believed he'd know how to cook? Even though it's just congee with eggs with the familiar aroma of instant congee ready to be served after pouring hot water, I find it refreshing.

"Yeah, I saw it. Thanks, anyway." I pull the chair out and sit down.

“Are you wearing underwear?” What the fuck kind of question is that?

“Yeah. No worries. I’m not wearing yours. I’ll wash your clothes before returning them.”

Saying nothing, Arc sits opposite me and chows down the steamy congee. I eat mine in silence and remember something from last night. Arc’s words confuse me, yet I’m reluctant to ask.

“What?” asks Arc knowingly.

“Ah... nothing...”

“You’re glazing at me so many times that your eyes might pop out. Just ask.” Why is he so fierce? He wasn’t like this yesterday.

“I remember last night. “What’s with me as your person?”

Arc heaves a sigh, and our eyes meet again.

“You’re my peer mentee. That means you’re my person.”

“What about P’Yeepoon?”

“She’s my person too. Any more questions?”

“Okay. Got it. It’s your way to show your protection over your peer mentees.” That’s it. With no more questions, I focus on my breakfast.

When I almost finish the congee, Arc passes me a bag of antibiotics from the hospital and drives me to the dormitory, lecturing me on the way until my ears go numb. Before I exit the car, he stresses in a low, dictatorial voice.

“Arm. ask for my permission next time if you want to go to the bar.”

“Can I ask for it in advance?”

“You’re not allowed.”

“See? I can’t go anymore this year?”

“Don’t go without me. There are plenty of cafés and bakeries around the university. You can go there.”

“It’s not the same.”

“Quit talking back.”

I purse my lips at him so hard that it gets exhausting. “Thank you for the ride, by the way.”

“Yeah.”

I shut the door and the Superior Prince accelerates away. I exhale a sigh of relief and enter the dormitory with my wounded head to deal with the hot issue from the bar after the shutdown of my brain after getting smashed with a beer bottle.

“Arm!” Pipo and Sand call my name at the same time as soon as I push the door open.

“Yeah. It’s me.”

“I thought you died. How are you feeling? Still hurt?”

“Not really. Are you guys okay?” I ask, observing their bodies. They have no severe injuries aside from a few bruises on their faces.

“I got punched in the corner of my eye.”

“As for me, some asshole kicked my leg and I fell face first onto a trash bin. I’m fucking mad,” says Pipo sadly. He gets up from the bed, takes my hand, and leads me outside despite me arriving only recently.

“Hey, hey, where are we going?”

“Clearing up what happened last night at Po’s room.”

I nod, compliantly. I didn’t expect to see a huge group of my dear friends together behind the door. Some scream while some charge toward me.

What the fuck is wrong with yooooou? Tell me.

“Arm is here. Are you wearing my idol’s shirt?”

“Hold up. Are you guys crazy?”

“Hmmmm, the smell of a cool person.” Waaaah, I’m going to cry. It’s too late because they are all over me and sniff Arc’s shirt delightedly like perverts.

“Bastards, get away from me. Have you all gone nuts after last night?”

“You know nothing, Arm.”

“Then tell me what I don’t know. And let go of me. You guys keep sniffing me. I got chills. Are you insane?”

It takes a while for these wild guys to calm down. We usually use Yo’s room as our den, like this time.

I sit on the edge of the bed and asked about the beaten dude. The answer is the same as what Yeepoon told me: He must stay at the hospital for some time to recover. Meanwhile, these guys right here must pay the penalty for fighting.

But I didn't expect to hear someone's name.

"What did P'Arc do?" I mutter after Sand mentions him.

"You don't know, huh? P'Arc has to pay the penalty too."

"What happened?"

"A fight."

"No, no. Didn't he settle the fight and take me to the hospital?"

"As if! That was later. When Arc knew who hit you, he beat that dude to a pulp. The other guy got his ankle broken and was admitted to the hospital. You had no idea?"

Erm... I swallow several times, never imagining another big fight transpiring while I was unconscious.

"What happened next?"

"Let me tell you everything. Well..."

The guys narrate the chaotic epic story together, admiring the Superior Prince greatly, saying he's their idol, super cool, and protective of his peer mentee. Damn, Arc beat someone's ass upppppppppp.

No wonder they grabbed Arc's shirt like perverts when I stepped inside. The Superior Prince's fanboys are horrifying, and now I'm terrified of my friends.

"Think about it. P'Copp spotted us and helped us settle the fight, then P'Arc showed up ten minutes later. He saw you unconscious with an ice pack on your head and his expression completely changed."

The narrating guy makes an enraged face to paint the picture.

"I remember his expression. He asked who did it. When I pointed at the fourth year motherfucker, the bar became a boxing ring."

"Messy!"

"It was insane. I was satisfied but acted cool."

"My freaking idol."

"He stomped on that asshole like a character in Kill Bill."

"But what he did was wrong," I interrupt everyone and receive collective scowls.

"I know. P'Arc knows. That's why he said we should never do what he did. When he turned to us and spoke, he was fucking cool. Daaaamn, I want to be like him, protecting who I love," that dude wriggles on the floor like a worm being boiled.

These guys have gone crazy...

"Why don't we go and thank P'Arc together?" Pipo chirps in excitement. Can you imagine? His barbaric face contrasts with his mannerisms extremely.

"Good idea. Goooosh, I want to see my idol."

"Let's go! The Superior Prince's admirers!"

"Will we be able to find him?"

"I checked his schedule. Let's wait for him at the civil engineering workshop room."

I have no words for my friends' obsession. Imagine a dozen freshmen gathering to see their idol. Had they not specified it was to express their gratitude, I would've assumed they'd jump on someone.

The professor dismisses the class early before lunch, so we all assemble in front of the classroom and parade to the civil engineering workshop room where the third-year students are studying. I'm the only one not into this.

"Who are you looking for?" asks one of Arc's friends. The third-year students are out for lunch now, but a group of fanboys get in the way.

"We're here to thank you guys and P'Arc for helping us last night."

"No big deal. We're all from the same department, after all."

"Still, thank you." Their mouths are moving while their eyes flick around to search for someone.

"Yeah, you can all go now."

"Where's P'Arc?"

"He left."

"Ugh... what the hell?" They look sad. Ha! You don't know the Superior Prince well. He switches from place to place, hard to catch. As if he would stay still for you all to praise him like any normal human being.

"P'Copp, can you thank P'Arc on our behalf?"

"Okay. Will you leave now?"

"Sure, sure."

“Nong Arm,” a senior calls my name before I spin around.

“Yes.”

“Arc said you don’t need to take care of him at the field today.”

“Why?”

“Take care of yourself first. You have to clean the wound this evening, don’t you? Don’t you dare go near the field, or he’ll kill you.” Damn, both Arc and his friends are brutal.

Come to think of it, I don’t have to waste my energy on taking care of those soccer players. It’d be nice to enviably get some rest. I didn’t expect Copp’s words to fuel my friends’ admiration toward Arc.

“I want to be P’Arc’s peer menteeeee.”

“He’s handsome, nice and virtuous.”

Virtuous my ass. He broke the senior’s ankle.

In addition to the Superior Prince’s supremacy, his fans are something else. Arc is amazing. Not only are girls smitten with him, but the boys in the same department idolize him.

I’m so proud of Mr. Rungson.

The male dormitory is bustling with chatters. Even at night, my friends still form a circle and blabber about Arc. Even the yet recovered Guy is on the phone with us from the hospital.

And me? I’m drowsy, unable to comprehend the conversation. Pipo eventually taps my shoulder to take me up.

“Arm, your friend is asking you. Can you hear?”

“Huh? What was that?”

“We want to know what we need to do to make P’Arc accept our requests on Facebook and IG.”

“Why are you asking me this? He hasn’t even unblocked me on IG.”

“Oh, huh? Why? You’re his peer mentee.” They’re all shocked. Only my best friends, Sand and Pipo, know the Superior Prince’s atypical behaviors from the beginning.

“So what if I’m his peer mentee? I’m not his girlfriend. If he ever has one, he might even block her when upset.”

The guys’ faces fall. You can’t accept that, right? Ha!

“P’Arc is a fucking...”

“I told you not to...” Before I finish, they cut in.

“A fucking idol!”

Shit! A plot twist. It’s like we’re not talking about the same topic.

I listen to their exaggerated compliments and return to my room at two in the morning. For fuck’s sake. I have my first class at eight tomorrow. Once in my room, I see my second-year peer mentor’s text inviting me out for ice cream tomorrow evening. I hope Arc isn’t going.

“Look at you... why the long face? What now?” asks Sand, noticing me and craning his neck from the opposite bed.

“P’Yeepoon will treat me to ice cream tomorrow.”

“That’s great. Why the fuck are you sad?”

“How can I not be? P’Yeepoon will definitely bring P’Jet, and P’Jet will definitely bring P’Arc.”

“Why are you afraid of him?”

“He’s always picking on me.”

“You’re his peer mentee. He obviously cares about you.”

“Oh, yeah? And yet he blocked me. He hasn’t unblocked me, you know?”

“He can even block his peer mentor. Who are you to please for justice?” My best friend’s words just dumbfounded me. Right. I’m a peer mentee who causes trouble. Why would he care?

Not to mention that Arc has a problem with all living creatures on the planet. Why am I fixated on this?

“Hey, why don’t you block him back?”

“S...Should I?” I ask reluctantly upon the suggestion.

“Get back at him. If he can block you, you can do the same thing. He hasn’t blocked you on facebook, like or your phone number, right? Do it.”

“Is it a good idea?”

“It is. Just give it a try... He’ll know not to mess with you.”

The encouragement hypes me up. I ponder it for a few moments. What do I do...? What should I do? Finally, I grab my phone, go to each app as suggested and lock Arc.

“I hope he realizes he should never block me again,” I mumble to Sand.

“It’ll work. Even though he’s my idol, you’re more important to me.”

“Thank’s a lot, man.”

“Go to bed to wake up fresh tomorrow.”

I wake up fresh in the morning due to Sand’s suggestion. All my worry is gone, same for the challenging feeling. I’m fucking curious about Arc’s reaction. Is he uneasy like me?

Unfortunately, we don’t cross paths in the daytime. I have no clue how he feels.

I must see if Arc will show up for the ice cream this evening.

Yeepoon chose a famous ice cream shop near the university as our meeting place. Most customers are students from our university. I enter and look for a table to find my second-year peer mentor and her boyfriend already there.

“Hi, P’Yeepoon, hi P’Jet.”

“Hey, how’s the wound?” asks Jet, my fourth year peer mentor, in worry.

“It got better. It doesn’t hurt anymore. I’ll remove the stitches soon.”

“What a relief. Order anything you want. P’Jet’s treat this time.” says the girl with a smile, sliding the menu forward.

“I want this one.”

“Okay, I’ll write it down. When’s P’Arc coming?” My steel heart races upon that sentence. It’s nothing much. I’m just scared of him deep down.

“Don’t worry. The customers will make a sound when he arrives.”

I nod in agreement. Whenever we had a meal together, Arc's appearance never failed to excite everyone.

His popularity is unimaginable.

The medium sized cups of ice cream are served later. We catch up as usual, especially about some lessons and the never ending department activities.

"Hmmmmm." The ice cream shop stirs. I shift my attention away from the ice cream and conversation since the most important person has arrived.

"P'Arc, come over here," Yeepoon greets cheerfully. The Superior Prince walks over with a deadpan face and sits next to Jet, intentionally leaving the chair beside me empty.

"What's with you? Why are you squeezing against me and my girlfriend?"

"I want to sit here," replies Arc in a low voice. I don't know if he's angry or in a good mood, or thinking about something. I really can't tell.

"Go sit with Arm."

"..." No response.

"It's okay. This feels warm. Order anything you want, P'Arc," the engineering princess attempts to ease the tension as much as possible. She nails it.

I watch his large hand flip the menu a few times and write on the order note, and Yeepoon suddenly shows her generosity to me.

"Do you want anything else, Arm? Go for it. P'Arc will write it down."

"Ah..." Before I answer, the tall guy interrupts me.

“Who are you talking to, Yeepoon?”

“Arm.”

“Who?”

“P’Arccccc.”

You son of a bitch!! Are you going to be like this? His reaction indicates he knows I blocked him last night. Fuck, is this good or bad?

“Why did you call my name?”

“Don’t tease nong Arm.”

“Tease who? Does our gear code have someone with that name?”

Ugggggggh, it hurts. It hurts in my heart...

“Did he do something wrong? Let’s talk it out today. The angel gear code shouldn’t fight, guys.” Yeepoon whimpers. Jet stifles a smile by her side, baffling me.

“No one did anything wrong.”

“Then why won’t you talk to Arm.”

“I can’t see him. Yeepoon, you can talk alone?”

“Wahh, P’Arcccc...”

Arc never reflects on himself and now puts me on the spot. How is someone like me supposed to do anything except admit it?

“You blocked me first. Why can’t I do the same to you?”

I won't reveal who persuaded me because it was bound to happen someday anyway.

"..." Arc gives no response. I sulk, letting silence wash over us. It's so quiet that I wipe my sweat, never experiencing such a difficult situation.

To be honest, getting hit in the head isn't as uncomfortable as this.

"I admit I did wrong, but you blocked me first for no reason."

"You flirted with my friend."

"Huh?" Arc finally speaks. "Yeah, It was just a joke. Why are you so possessive of your friend?"

"..."

"Ah, ah, I got it. I'll never joke like that with any of your friends anymore. Will you unblock me now?"

"When I feel like it."

"In this lifetime or the next?"

Arc gazes up from the note and pen and meets my eyes.

"We'll talk when you stop messing with me."

"..."

"I don't want to eat anymore. This kid is annoying."

"Oh..."

"Bye, P'Jet, Bye Yeepoon. See you at the field." Arc leaves without another word with me.

I'm confused. Is the Superior Prince an alien. I thought we talked it out, but somehow I pushed his buttons. I don't know what to do with his temper.

"It's okay, Arm. P'Arc is always like this. You'll get used to it." Yeepoon pats my shoulder in consolation. I wag my spoon and nod in resignation.

"Don't overthink it," Jet comforts me.

"Yeah."

"No one has ever done this to him."

"Of course. Who would dare?" I wouldn't have done it without being nudged. So scaryyyy.

"When did you block him?"

"Last night. Around two in the morning."

"Yeah. He texted me at half past two." Jet slides his phone toward me.

The screen displays a Facebook inbox, a conversation between two people. Jet and, obviously, The Superior Prince of the Angel Gear Code.

Anol Paraminphisan

P'Jet, call Arm.

Jet Jessada

Let's talk in the morning.

Anol Paraminphisan

Do it now. Tell him to unblock me.

Beads of sweat form on my forehead after I read a few messages.

Jet Jessada

What's wrong?

Anol Paraminphisan

He blocked me.

Jet Jessada

You blocked him first.

Anol Paraminphisan

It's different. Tell him for me.

Jet Jessada

Okay. I'm inviting him for ice cream tomorrow.

I'll tell him then. Or you can tell him yourself.

Anol Paraminphisan

No. Now.

Jet Jessada

Arc.

Anol Paraminphisan

Call Arm.

Call Arm.

Call Arm.

Call Arm.

Jet Jessada

Arc. You've lost it.

Anol Paraminphisan

Call Arm.

Jet Jessada

He's probably asleep. Why should I call him?

Anol Paraminphisan

Call Arm.

I'm confused. Sometimes he acts like he doesn't care about me but then acts like he fucking does...

I guess it's the Superior Prince's personality.

The tension from all the blocking continues until the following soccer match. Although I unblocked Arc on everything, he still wouldn't face me. He avoided me whenever we crossed paths. It's impossible today since I have to take care of the players.

"P'Arc, here's your water."

"Yeah. Thanks." I'm fully abandoned. Didn't he say he didn't want water from someone else?

All students from the male dormitory are here, neglecting their duties to bring water and energy drinks for their idol.

After the incident, the topic of Arc helping his juniors at the bar became the talk of the town. Soon after, freshmen aside from the electrical engineering students turned into the Superior Prince's admirers.

The match begins ten minutes later. The engineering players attack relentlessly. The ambience is more lively than ever because the fanboys from the dormitory cheer for Arc with all their might, screaming louder than the girls.

The girls on the grandstand scratch their heads, wondering why these idiots are shaking their hips on the sideline and shouting, 'Arc,' nonstop.

They scream even if Arc is just dribbling.

They compliment his gracious posture even when he trips and falls in the middle of the field.

Even when Arc simply jogs, they keep exclaiming how cool he looks. Erm...Is Arc ever wrong in their eyes?

When the first half is over, everyone swarms around the Superior Prince to serve him. I distribute water to the other players and return to my seat.

In the second half, Arc requests to switch the player out of the blue. The tall guy walks toward me and asks a question in a plain voice.

"Where's my water?"

"You can see me now?" I ask in excitement, my heart inflating.

"Do you want me to ignore you again?"

"No, no. Here." I reach for a chilled water bottle in the bucket and hand it to him.

Arc removes the lid and almost finishes the whole bottle. He sits beside me without a word and fumbles for something in his bag.

"I unblocked you. I promise to never do it again even if you block me forever."

"So what if I block you on those apps?"

"..."

"I'm not blocking you in real life."

"It feels like that. I can't talk to you, and you're fucking hard to find."

"You're dumb."

"Yeah, you're right."

Arc pulls my wrist and shoves something in my palm...

"Just come to me if you want to talk. It's not that difficult. Plus, I'm hardly active online, sick of reading texts."

"What do you prefer, then?"

"I like to look at your face."

"To challenge me? You're good at that."

"You're a pain in the ass."

"Arc, come help the team. They're catching up with us," says the fourth-year coach assistant. The tall guy rises, runs to the side of the field, and officially joins the game.

I ponder his words earlier and drop my gaze to the object in my hand...

An apartment key.

Something exciting happens at the male dormitory again one evening as Sand spreads the news about their idol. It's not that big of a deal, but to the obsessed fanboys, it's a national-level matter.

"Next week is P'Arc's birthday, Tuesday 2nd. What should we do to surprise our idol?" The meeting in Yo's room is in all seriousness. I yawn.

"Let's buy him soccer shoes."

"He has tons of them, never wearing the same pairs to practice."

"What about a plushie from my room? I got hundreds."

"Dumbass, what would he do with the plushie? Use your head."

"Ask Arm."

"Right. Arm, do you know what P'Arc likes?" Everyone flicks their eyes at me like I'm humanity's last hope.

"P'Arc? He likes to curse and block me."

"Ugh, you idiot. We're talking about presents. We want to buy him something good together."

"Just cheering for him every match is enough. As for the present...I don't know. I bet he'll receive a bunch."

"Yeah. I forgot."

As they brainstorm about the Superior Prince's present, I excuse myself to rest in my room. The notification from the Angel Gear Code's group chat chimes. It's nothing but the time and date for Arc's birthday party at a restaurant.

No surprise is required since Mr. Anol isn't a fan of surprises. I need to get him a present regardless.

After mulling over it for a night, I've decided to buy him grout. On the gear code selection day, he gave it to me even though I had no idea what to make of it.

I'll return the perplexity to him as indirect revenge.

Two days before Arc's birthday, my life is so hectic that I can't do anything. My inbox is constantly bombarded by students from the same and different departments greeting and asking me mostly about my third-year peer mentor's preferences as a reference for presents.

I'm not the most helpful in this matter, but I reply as much as I can.

They should've directed these questions to Arc's best friends, Yeepoon, or Jet, since they've known him longer than me. I'm a freshman who hung out with him a few times. I can't guess his mind.

"Armmmmmm." Here we go again. The thirteenth person today.

Angun asked me to make Arc accept her request on social media platforms last time. This time, her friend steps in. Does the whole gang fancy the Superior Prince? I'm fucking jealous of Arc. Heaps of people are in love with him.

"What's up?"

"I know it's P'Arc's birthday soon. Can you deliver my present to him?"

"Why don't you give it to him yourself? It's better that way."

"I don't know. I'm worried P'Arc would feel uncomfortable. I think...you should do it."

"Ah...Well..."

"Please, Arm. Help me." Her pleading eyes make me weak.

Unable to decline, I agree to help. From then on, Anon with No Debt is a matchmaker for numerous girls. Most of them want me to deliver their presents, believing Arc won't turn down his peer mentee.

Needless to say, the list of girls requesting me to help contains twenty-one names already. It means I have to carry twenty-one presents to my third-year peer mentor on his birthday. Time flies. The national chaotic celebration transpires in a few blinks of an eye.

I barely saw my peer mentors prior to this day because we were all busy. However, this is an important day. We must clear our schedule.

Yeepoon said our gear code would celebrate this evening. Right now, it's my time to play Cupid, plus a delivery man, to deliver Arc's presents at noon.

I search for him for a while, dragging a bag of twenty-one presents, which increases to twenty-eight after a few minutes. Pipo, Sand, and the other guys from the dormitory volunteer to

help me look for the national public figure. By the time we spot him, it's time for the afternoon class.

"P'Arc." The sight astonishes me.

The tall guy is sitting at a marble table with his friends at the back of the department building. Instead of dishes or lecture notes like usual, the table is full of presents to the point he will need to reverse his car here to collect everything.

I assume Arc wishes to reject the presents, but what can he do? Several people put them there in hopes they would be accepted. I feel sorry for those with one-sided love.

"What?"

"These are presents from your fans." I lift the bag onto the table and wipe my sweat in relief.

"Where's yours?" Arc asks for mine despite the pile of presents on the table.

"It's not here. I'll give it to you when we celebrate with the gear code."

"Okay."

"Where are you going after this?"

"To my class."

"What about all these presents? You can't leave them here. It'll be a shame." My voice trails off as I can't contain my jealousy. I wish this would happen to me.

Oddly enough, our fates are totally different despite the similarity of our names.

"What am I supposed to do?" Huh? He's asking me?

"Your friends can help you carry them to your car."

"They're busy."

But they're here, picking their teeth.

"I'll help you."

"No. It's not your matter to worry about. I'll take care of it. You'll go to the restaurant with me this evening. Tell Yeepoon not to pick you up."

"Okay."

Arc sums up everything and walks off to the right side of the building, leaving me puzzled amid the mountain of presents. Soon the dear fanboys, my electrical engineering friends, transfer the presents to a cart and push it to the Superior Prince's car. This is the great present-giving on a great day, Pipo mumbles.

You guys are idiots. This doesn't feel like Arc's birthday but more like Labor Day. For fuck's sake.

In the evening, I join Arc's birthday party held by the gear code. We booked a private area in the restaurant. Yeepoon said there would be only our gear code, but it turned out to be the opposite.

"Arc and Arm are here. Yeah!"

Four escalate to twelve. How the hell are there so many people in the gear code? I keep the question inside and sit beside my peer mentors. The Superior Prince gets seated at the head of the table as the birthday boy.

"We have a side gear code. The graduate had two peer mentees before the gear code was separated into two in P'Jet's generation," Yeepoon explains.

We introduce ourselves briefly. Since many of them are familiar faces, I'm not uncomfortable like the first time.

We start the meal once the atmosphere turns to normal, chatting and blessing the birthday boy.

Two hours later, we give Arc our presents.

"The freshmen might not know this. It's our tradition to open the present on the table. Don't overthink it if the seniors make fun of your shabby presents."

What!!!?

As everyone laughs, my heart...is bleeding.

Why did no one tell me the presents would be shown? Daaaaamn, I'm dying to crush the grout into pieces. I maintain my composure and watch the fourth-year peer mentors, Jet and Boat, initiate the activity.

"Arc, which present do you want to open first?" The question sends me chills. Our eyes meet for a second before he answers with his curved lips.

"Let's start with the seniors."

"Okay, mine first."

The anticipation grows high. When the DVD of adult videos pops up, I realize I'm not the only shitty person here. Boat comes after Jet with a ceremonial water pouring set for Arc to use at the temple.

The nonsensicality lights up the mood of the birthday party. Arc opens the presents one by one. The sophomores and the other freshmen aren't that playful. Some of them even added a beautiful blessing card to the present box. I'm in trouble as the last one.

"You don't need to open it now," I say, knowing it's useless.

Arc picks up the present wrapped in blue and basically rips it.

"Grout. Haha. Fuck, that's funny," Jet laughs upon seeing the object in the box. Arc remains silent, looking upset to an extent.

"Well... You gave this to me at that time. I just did the same."

"Do you know why I bought you grout?" asks the birthday boy. I have no clue. I can't drink it for sure.

"No."

"The dormitory bathroom is dirty. There are cracks on the tiles that tiny centipedes dwell in at night. Have you never noticed until now? How can you be so dumb?"

Ouch!

It hurts agaaaaaaain. He rags me in front of the whole gear code. Damn it.

"You can use this at your apartment. I bought it for you."

"Yeah. Thanks."

"Yeah, yeah! The present-giving is done now. Let's sing and bring out the cake. I can't wait for the last activity." I turn to my second-year peer mentor in curiosity but receive no explanation. Everyone focuses on singing.

"Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you...Happy birthday. Happy birthday..."

"..."

"Happy birthday, Anol~~"

"Make a wish." A small cake is slid close to the charming face. Arc stares at the lit candles for a moment and blows them as the others clap.

"This is Arc's birthday. Next is Noona's. We'll have another party soon. Well, let's follow the last tradition of our gear code before we cut the cake."

The three freshmen scratch their heads.

"It's what many have been waiting for: The lot drawing."

"Woooooooo!"

"The reward is the present the birthday boy wishes to give one of us, so there's only one."

"I want Arc's present so much."

"The big reward last year was Jet's bicycle. Let's see what Arc prepared."

"How exciting."

I'm soooooooo excited. As if -_-

"We'll draw the lots. It depends on your luck to get it. Yeepoon made the lots for this. Arc, go ahead," says Jet.

Jet shakes the plastic box with his large hands and holds it out to the birthday boy.

"Ooooooh." Arc reaches inside and takes out a roll of white paper. Everyone looks so thrilled that I feel the need to play along.

"Arc, announce the winner."

"Okay. The winner is..."

"..."

"Arm."

"Nooooooooo, how could I miss it? Waaah, congratulations, Arm." The third-year peer mentor from the side gear code throws her arms around me, her expression either delighted or sorrowful.

At that second, I couldn't believe I'll get the present.

"This is yours."

"Thank you."

I accept the present from the Superior Prince and ask him.

"Can I open it now?"

"No. Do it at your dorm."

"Okay."

"Now that we're done with the presents, let's enjoy the cake." Time passes. We celebrate, relish the cake, read birthday cards, take solo and group photos, and all the things we can do today. Meanwhile, I...

"Excuse me to answer this call." A lie. I'll open the present in the restroom. The curiosity is killing me.

I lock the stall door and slowly unwrap the present, not expecting the footsteps and familiar voices of the newcomers.

"I wonder what the present Arc gave his peer mentee is."

They're unmistakably Jet and Boat.

Of course, a nosy guy like me eavesdrops on the conversation.

"Same."

"Ask your peer mentee. What a fucking lucky guy to get a present from that Superior Prince."

"Arm wasn't lucky. It was actually me."

"Oh, shit. How come?"

My name is fucking huge on the lot. P'Jet. P'Jet! How could he read it as Arm?

"Did you ask Arc why he did that?"

"He told me it was for the one he wanted to give it to. That's it!"

"What's the point of the lot drawing, then!?"

"Yeah."

"Is that okay?"

"What do you expect from someone like him? He doesn't give a damn if you're not important."

I sit silently in the stall, trying my best to hold my breath. I wait until their footsteps fade away and resume unwrapping the present.

I don't know if the present will suit anyone else.

But I've never imagined it to be gifted to me.

Arc's workshop shirt.

How do I know? There's a note with a short message.

Simple but easy to understand.

'Anol, 2016-2017

Anon, 2018 and forever'

Chapter 6

Going Home, No More Arguing

Sir Isaac Newton once said, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

Does it have anything to do with my situation? No. I just want to mention it.

Just like how I feel about Arc. I've attempted to justify his actions countless times and always come to the conclusion of 'whatever'. I'd rather grout the tiles than guess the Superior Prince's mind.

I have no clue about why Arc gave me his workshop shirt. Perhaps... the question is better left unanswered.

The party is still lively. I return from the restroom to the table then we all chat for a while before splitting up. I'm the unluckiest one since Arc is supposed to give me a ride, insinuating that I'll tense up all the way to the dormitory.

"I opened it." Arc turns his charming face to me. "Your present." I initiate a conversation to break the awkward silence, but I won't bring up the fact that he dismissed Jet to give me the shirt.

"Well, you don't have to buy one." Did he take me for poor after I owed him money?

I'm actually loaded. With bullshit...

"What will you wear, then?"

"I'll buy a new one. The old one is yours."

You fucking bastard! I thought he'd say something that would move me to tears, but no. You're not normal, Arc. At a loss, I respond with sarcasm.

"Thank you very much. I will never forget your kindness."

"You're welcome. And you must wear it. It's more important than anything."

"When I have a peer mentee next year, do I have to pass it on? Like the Angel Gear Code's legacy?"

"No."

"Oh."

"It's mine." Arc's voice darkens like a threat.

"You gave it to me. It's mine."

"We're co-owners."

“Why?”

“Why?” He’s mocking meeee. I strike back without fear.

“Are you messing with me?”

“Are you messing with me?”

“P’Arc.”

“P’Arcccccccc.”

“Fuck.”

“Fuuuuuuuck.”

“Okay. I give up.” Arc barks a satisfied laugh. Presumably overjoyed to mess with his absolutely gorgeous and perfect peer mentee. If I ever meet Mr. Rungson, I’ll roast the hell out of you.

“You’re sulking, Anon.” Arc taunts.

“Yeah. Not to mention I’m just your peer mentee. I feel bad for your future girlfriend. She must endure your unbelievable behaviors.”

“The person I’ll date doesn’t have to endure anything. If they were to endure something...”

“What?”

“Just root for Liverpool.”

Fuck, how dare he condescend me!?

“There’s nothing to endure being a fan of Liverpool. We have pride.”

“Oh, your pride is sure overrated, given the zero chance of winning in this lifetime.”

“Let’s settle this face to face.”

“How are you supposed to beat me when you can’t even win in a soccer bet?”

Arc and I are in a battle in his car, a match inestimably greater than the UEFA Champions League with our pride at stake, a matter of life and death. By the time we arrive at the dormitory, we’ve shed blood several times. And, as predicted, the winner is...

Definitely not me...

Losing, I enter the dormitory with my head down. Before I reach my room, my dormmates show up to welcome me.

"Arm is here. Yeah!!" Their shouts resound as they swarm over me like ravenous vultures. One catches me while one yanks me. Before I know it, they've forcefully dragged me into Yo's room, the den of the trashy male dormmates.

"How was my idol's birthday party? Was he happy?" asks Sand, grinning. I would've believed he had a crush on Arc had he not been a playboy.

"It was okay."

"Shit, it wasn't as impressive as it should've been. We must give him another surprise."

"Cut it ouuuuuuuuuut."

It was exhausting to deal with Arc. Now I have to deal with them?

"What's that box?" asks Pipo in curiosity. I hug the box of Arc's workshop shirt tightly, refusing to let anyone touch it.

"It's mine. From P'Yeepoon."

"Oh."

"Can I go to my room now?" I ask in weariness.

"You're all whiny when we ask you questions, Arm. The world is unfair. Why is someone like you his peer mentee? I'm fucking jealous."

I narrow my eyes at my best friend in perplexity.

"It's awful being his peer mentee. It's giving me a headache."

"Can we switch up?"

"What's your obsession with him?"

"He's our idol. Got a problem?" Another guy chimes in after the other.

"The Superior Prince is super cool. I want to kiss his toes in admiration."

"Stop right there, Po."

“He’s super duper cool, you son of a bitch. I want to date him.”

“Dumbass.” Look at your face. Your barbaric appearance intimidates girls in daylight, yet you wish to date Arc. Plus, Arc probably treats his lover with tough love.

“He helped you at the bar. He deserves some cred.”

“How did he help me? I got hit in the head.”

They all stare daggers at me like I just committed a murder, the hostility in their eyes sending me shivers. I quickly correct myself to somehow survive.

“I’m kidding.”

“Of course, you are. We’ll beat your ass if you mean it. Those who insult my idol better watch out.” The dramatic praises begin, led by Pipo then Sand, Yo and Guy, who is still in a terrible state with an arm cast. The only thing I can do is... endure it.

“P’Arc is fucking amazingggggg. He looks handsome even when he eats.”

“Righttttt.”

“His movements are poised like a flamingo.”

“How do you move like a flamingo?” I ask in wonder.

“Come on. Even Chris Evans can’t beat him in coolness.”

“He adores his juniors and peer mentees.”

“He doesn’t adore me.”

“He does. Didn’t he destroy the other party for you?”

“Ah...”

“How romantic. Kyaaaaa!”

I listen to them blabbering for an hour. By the time I get to shower and get ready to sleep, it’s three in the morning. I haven’t checked heaps of my LINE notifications.

One of the latest messages is a request for a new group chat.

‘The Angel Gear Code’

I join the group chat and instantly receive a text from Yeepoon.

YeepoonJP

Arm is hereeeeeeeeeee.

I created a group chat for our gear code.

We don't have to contact each other one by one anymore.

Armm01

Nice.

YeepoonJP

These are photos of P'Arc's birthday.

Happy birthday.

created an album

The photos of the birthday party last evening are uploaded into the album. I scroll through them until Yeepoon sends us another photo. It shows me accepting Arc's present in a pleasant atmosphere, while the birthday boy's expression is the opposite...

YeepoonJP

sent a photo

This one is super cute >//<

Jet loves Yeepoon so much

Isn't that Arc and Arm from BNK?

YeepoonJP

Arc and Arm are my biasesssssss

Armm01

దేవుడు?

These two are birds of a feather. I feel sorry for their future children. To my surprise, Mr. Anol turns up right after Yeepoon sent the photo.

Arc_AnoI

Please

Fuck!! He'll mess with me again. I'd better brace myself.

Arc_Ano1

Please let me save it

Possessed!! Arc is possessed by a ghost. Why would he save it? He never gave a damn about me. Besides, we look horrible in the photo.

Overwhelmed by bewilderment, I ask him.

Armm01

Are you trying to mess with me or what?

Arc_Ano1

I'll look at your face when I poop. It must feel great.

Armm01

Answer my call. I'll yell at you.

Arc_Ano1

I don't want to talk to a fan of Liverpool

Armm01

As if a fan of Man Utd is any good.

Arc_Ano1

I don't talk to a fan of liverpool

Armm01

Got it

Arc_Ano1

I don't talk to a fan of Liverpool.

Fuck you!! Arc, you...

I close the group chat right away. Ten minutes later, more notifications chime in from the same group chat. I suppose Jet and Yeepoon are chattering away. The sound pushes me to check.

YeepoonJP

Did you take any photos, P'Arc?

You can upload them here. I want to show them to my friends.

My friends admire you a lot.

Arc_Anoi

I have some. Choose it for yourself.

created an album

Jet loves Yeepoon so much

Where are my girlfriend and me? There's only Arm.

I tap the album to find Arc uploading photos of his birthday party as requested, but it's full of photos of me.

Arc_Anoi

That's all I have. I'll delete it all now. Took up my storage.

True. Two hundred photos of me undoubtedly took up his storage. If he wasn't my cheeky peer mentor, I'd deem him as my stalker.

Armm01

Who the hell asked you to take photos of me!?

Arc_Anoi

I don't talk to a fan of Liverpool

YeepoonJP

Let's not fight, you two.

It's okay if you don't have photos of us, P'Arc.

It's late. Good night, everyone.

Jet loves Yeepoon so much.

Good night.

Armm01

Good night to everyone except that person.

Arc_Anoi

I don't talk to a fan of Liverpool

You piece of shit! He's messing with me until the last second.

I'm exhausted, he makes me exhausted. I've had enough of the Superior Prince. The fight can continue tomorrow. I need a time out to calm down.

The cheering activity had ended yesterday, as Pipo and Sand informed us. We fail to receive our workshop shirts from the seniors, but we can afford to buy them ourselves with our heads held high.

Since we're going to the workshop room today, I put on Arc's workshop shirt that he gifted me on his birthday last week to show off to the girls. Even though the size is too large, it's not a problem. Engineering students like us have nothing to flaunt but our gears and workshop shirts.

However, once I step into the department building, I get bombarded with questions.

"Arm, whose shirt is this?"

"I bought it."

"Liar. The ones who didn't attend the cheering activity got no shirts. They'll be on sale at the association the day after tomorrow." Shit! How did I not know this? I flick my eyes to Sand in his workshop shirt in confusion.

"Sand has it." I shift the attention to the dude next to me.

"It's my peer mentor's. I asked for it. Who did you get it from?"

I don't want to reveal it's from Arc, afraid he'll call our dormmates over to sniff the shirt. So I decide to lie.

"P' Jet."

"Didn't he give it to his girlfriend? Why would he pass it on to you?"

"He adores me like a little brother."

“Are you sure it’s not P’Arc’s?”

Though flustered, I insist. “It’s not.”

Who would’ve thought the karma from being nosy would catch me this fast? Arc suddenly walks over and stops in front of me. In front of meeeeeee.

“Arm.”

“H...Hey...What’s up? I...I’m going to class,” I say, stepping back in fear.

“Take care of me this evening during practice.”

“I know. Is that all?” I ask, flinging my backpack onto my shoulder.

“Yeah.”

The tall figure spins and heads in another direction, and I exhale a sigh of relief. Suddenly, more third-year students show up and say something that pushes me on the verge of jumping off a building.

“Arc, the workshop shirts will be on sale the day after tomorrow. If you need it, come get it this evening.”

“Thanks.”

“Where’s the old one?”

“I gave it to a dog.” Arc glances at me, making my hair stand on ends.

“Dog? What dog?”

“Arm.”

“The dog has the same name as your peer mentee.”

“Don’t mention him, he’s in the pool.”

“Huh? What pool?”

“Liverpool.”

“Oh, the team that never wins.” How cruel must you be to taunt me like this?

“At this point, you can just cuss me out in my face.”

“So sick of the attention seeker. I’m off.”

The tall figure mumbles that and swerves away, leaving the stupefaction. My friends glare at me as if I just committed an unforgivable sin. I bet the bomb will explode in a few seconds. Three...two...one!

“Armmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm, what’s going on exactly, you motherfucker?”

“I don’t know... I’m very handsome.”

“Don’t change the topic.”

“Hey, hey, I heard Liverpool is playing today. How exciting!”

Waaaaaaah, Arc, you couldn’t just throw a bomb at me and leave! I’m about to die.

The dormmates try to squeeze the answer out of me until I nod and admit my workshop shirt is from Arc. Fortunately, nothing crazy happens. No one yanks my shirt, but they praise the Superior Prince again.

They compliment his workshop shirt and other unrelated garments. After classes, they invite me to a café as a shelter from the rain to praise my third-year peer mentor some more.

Sorry, I’m not available today. I must be Mr. Anol’s servant at the soccer field.

“Take good care of my idol,” Sand stresses without a care of my feelings.

“I know.”

“It’s raining. Do you have an umbrella?” asks Pipo.

“I have one in my car. Are you worried about me?”

“No. I don’t want Arc to have a headache from berating you. I’m worried about the Superior Prince. Aren’t you too full of yourself?”

“Asshole.”

“Let’s split up now and fight at the dorm later.”

“Yeah.”

I dart to the parking lot in the rain and drive to the soccer field on the other side.

Arc has talent. He could predict the weather. If it gets cloudy, he'll play soccer outdoors, and, oddly enough, it won't rain. But if the sunlight is strong, he'll play soccer with his friends in the indoor soccer field. Believe it or not, it will rain soon or later.

If Mr. Rungson wasn't related to Zeus, then Arc must have a sixth sense.

I park my car unhurriedly, planning to saunter in the rain for girls to appreciate my looks. But in reality...

"Shit!" I swear, unable to unfurl my umbrella. I try my best, yet it won't budge. At last, I decide to run in the rain, knowing I'll be soaked from the downpour despite the short distance.

"Let's do it."

I hype myself up and sprint to the beverage store, then I head to my haunted ghost, who enjoys playing soccer with his friends. Look at my state. Even my underwear is drenched.

"Pass it here. Bastard, you touched the ball."

"Don't miss the penalty kick,"

The players are shouting from the soccer field. I place a water bottle on the bench and squeeze the hem of the wet workshop shirt when the tall guy jogs toward the sideline.

"You're soaked like a dog in the water. Who told you to run in the rain?" asks the Superior Prince, undoubtedly.

I gaze up at the tall guy hovering over me. Discontent, Arc fetches a towel from his bag and tosses it to me.

"Thank you." I wipe my face and explain, "My umbrella wouldn't unfurl, so I ran here."

"Wait in the car next time if it rains."

"How was I supposed to know? You're hot headed. I don't want to be scolded for being late." I tsk in annoyance. The tall guy snatches the towel and rubs my hair with it roughly. He's fucking rough, nearly ripping my hair off.

"Hey, it hurts," I protest, sulking. Arc softens slightly, like, really slightly, because it still hurts. And it feels awkward to be bossed around like this.

“I thought your scalp was too thick to feel anything.” Don’t provoke me, I’m warning you, or you won’t get chilled water after practice.

“Ahh... I’m a fragile boy. Why don’t you go play soccer, by the way?”

“I’m tired.”

“You’re tired? You could kick the ball for four hours without complaining.”

“Should I kick you instead?” Whoooooa, I’m scared of his shins. Seeing me swallow, the third-year peer mentor switches the subject. “Take off your shirt.”

“Huh?”

“Take it off. Why are you wearing a wet shirt?”

Grumbling, I doff the workshop shirt. At least I have my black tee to look cool to those girls waiting for their boyfriends on the sidelines. I would’ve appeared cooler had Arc not been drying my hair with the towel. He’s sabotaging me.

“Now go,” says Arc evenly.

“Where?”

“To your dorm.”

“Who will take care of you, then?”

“I’m done. Also leaving. Get changed once you’re at the dorm. If you get sick tomorrow, I’ll beat you to a pulp.” He’s harsher than my father. Damn.

“I know.”

“Get up, then.”

I can never disobey Arc. Someone then shouts from the field, and I turn to find it’s one of the Superior Prince’s friends.

“Where are you going, Arc? Leaving, already?”

“Yeah. See you on Monday.”

“Okay. Drive safe.”

They wave each other goodbye before Arc ushers me outside. It's still pouring. I sigh and hold the workshop shirt to run back to the parking lot like when I got here, but a large hand grips me.

"Don't run. I'll be right back."

"Where are you going?"

"I'll get an umbrella in my car."

"Hey, it's okay. I'm already wet. No worries..."

Never listening, Arc dashes off to the parking lot before I finish the sentence. A few moments later, he returns with an umbrella, drenched. He looks good even when soaked. What could possibly ruin his image?

"Come here. I'll walk you to your car," he orders in a stern voice.

"Ooooh, my peer mentor is so kind," I tease. Arc knocks my head gently to shut me up.

The black umbrella is small. Arc lets himself get rained on by staying at the back and stretching the umbrella forward over me. Despite the short distance between the building and the parking lot, this is my first time feeling like time moves slower than usual as I witness the side of Arc I've never seen.

His gentleness contradicts his looks. I used to feel sorry for his future lover, but now I'm kind of jealous of them.

"Text me when you're home," says the tall guy plainly. He nudges me inside the car.

"Take this." He passes the umbrella to me.

"Hey, no. What will you use, then?"

"I can go to my apartment from the parking lot without an umbrella. You need it to walk to the dorm. Take it!" Since I remain still, Arc throws the umbrella onto the passenger's seat and walks off to his car.

I stay still for some time, watching his black car accelerate out of my sight, and start the engine.

My third-year peer mentor's action suddenly moves me. Thank you for preventing my underwear from getting any wetter than this, though it's already soaked.

I can't comprehend his actions, but I remember his expression clearly when we were under the same umbrella. Maybe today is a good day for him despite the weather.

Because it's rare to see him smile so brightly, even for a brief moment...

I shower and get changed as soon as I'm in my room. Sand and Pipo aren't here, assumingly stuck in a café outside the university. I'm all alone. With my head empty, I look for something to do to kill my boredom. After checking the Engineer Cute Boy page, I have nothing to do...

My eyes land on the white grout. It's time to use it.

I've become a housekeeper maintaining the bathroom almost an hour before my roommate enters the room with a new topic.

"Let's eat."

"Are you still hungry after the ice cream?"

"Aren't you hungry? I'm doing this for you."

"Let's go after the rain stops." My friend nods. It's half past seven by the time the rain is finally gone. I was also caught up in the chat with my doormmates and just realized I forgot to text Arc.

My doom is promised.

I check LINE and freeze from head to toe at Arc's message.

'Wanna die?'

One sentence sends me halfway to hell.

Scared to be chastised, I quickly apologize despite knowing it's way too late

Armm01

Hey, I'm sorry. I forgot.

I arrived at around five

ಓ ಡ ~~~ ಡ ?

Five minutes later, no answer.

Uneasy and unable to stay still, I pace back and forth. I wonder if I should call him, but I also don't want to be told off. In the end I decide not to.

Armm01

Are you mad at me? Let's make up plsssss

My persistence works. Arc replies five minutes later.

Arc_anol

ಓಒಒ?

Armm01

You have this kind of sticker?

ಓ •• ?

Arc_anol

What? I use it all the time

(ಓ~ಓ❀)

That's weird. Why is he talking to me nicely? He even got cuter.

We text each other for a while. When he stops replying, I put my phone down to play a game on my laptop.

Rrrr...!

My phone rings, interrupting the fun. The number is of the person I was texting earlier.

"Yes?" I say as soon as I pick up the phone.

[Why did you talk to him?] No topic. No context. The sudden question surprises me.

What the hell!? I can't keep up with his mood swings anymore.

"Huh? Talk to whom? Who is it?"

[Copp. Why did you talk to him?]

"I... didn't."

[He was using my phone. Didn't it occur to you?]

Okay, I understand now. That explains the unusually friendly texts. His friend got his phone.

"How was I supposed to know? It's your account. How would I know it was someone else?"

[Ask next time.] His stern voice softens slightly.

"Who's scolding me right now? Is it P'Aaaarc?"

[No.]

"Who is this?"

[Mr. Aniruj.]

You asshole. That's my dad!

"If you're just going to mess with me, hang up. You know I won't win this argument."

[So you're aware?]

"Yeah."

Silence falls upon us for a few moments. Hearing Arc breathing on the other end, I don't want to hang up. I keep my phone to my ear, waiting for him to speak.

[Arm, tomorrow is Saturday.] The Superior Prince finally says something so random.

"So what?"

[Get ready. I'm taking you to the cinema.]

"We just watched a movie together."

[It has nothing to do with this.]

"Who else is going to join us?"

[Only the two of us are going.]

"Are we not inviting P'Jet and P'Yeepoon?"

[They have plans. There are only the two of us. Will you go or not?]

"What will I get from this?"

[Popcorn.]

“I can eat it anywhere.”

[But popcorn tastes best during a movie, doesn't it?]

BOOM!!

Arc remembers what I said? Though unbelievable, it hits me right in the feels. What a pleasant day. Mr. Rungson, your son is amazing.

“Where are we going?”

“None of your business.”

Oh, I was just asking.

“Can we eat first? I'm super hungry.”

“Yeah.”

Not wasting time choosing the restaurant, we turn and enter the one in front of us. While waiting for the food, I softly slide a pen and a pine of notes toward the tall guy. Arc studies them in puzzlement and asks me curtly.

“What?”

“Your autograph, pleaaaaase. My friends from the same major want it.”

“Your friends are funny.” Is it a positive or negative remark? Whatever. I'll try my best to fulfill my friends' wishes despite the risk of getting cussed out by the Superior Prince.

“Will you do it?”

“It's not exclusive or anything. I'm not as good of a person as your friends think.”

“Right.”

“Oh, are you fucking with me?”

“You said that. I just agreed.”

THUD!

“Whoa... that hurts. I'm fragile...” I protest after getting hit in the head with the pen, all dramatic even though it doesn't even hurt.

"You're fragile all over but thick skinned in the face," says Arc casually. He autographs each note.

I fix my eyes on him concentrating on the activity. The appetizers are gradually served. Arc is finished right when we get the main dishes.

"Here you go," Arc pushes the yellow notes forward.

"Give me the pen. I'll give you my autograph to be framed and worshiped." I extend my hand and almost throw away what he puts in my palm. Fuck, why did he give me a sausage? "I give up."

"You talk too much. Just eat."

Arc ends the conversation, so I chow down the meal. A while later, my stomach is full and it's time to mess with the person in front of me again.

"Why didn't you invite any of your friends to watch the movie with us?"

"No way. I've been with them for five workdays. I'm sick of their faces." His answer makes me feel terribly sorry for his friends.

"Aren't you sick of my face?"

"I'm fucking sick of you." What?! "But I felt like changing the mood to watch a movie with someone I got sick of."

"Can the person you're sick of get two cheese popcorn?"

"Why the fuck do you need that much?"

"The person you're sick of is gluttonous."

"One is enough."

"Arc! Arm!"

Someone's voice reaches us as we enjoy chatting about food. I turn in the direction and spot Jet striding into the restaurant, surprised to bump into us.

"You said you were working on an assignment with your friends, Arc. How come you're with Arm?" asks my fourth year peer mentor as soon as he takes a seat besides me. I'm not sure how their conversation went, but it seems Arc lied to Jet.

"We postponed it."

"Really?"

"Where's Yeepoon?" Arc changes the subject.

"Finding a new boyfriend."

"Great."

They're definitely in the same gear code. Damn.

"Are you here with P'Yeepoon?" I ask, getting lonely from only listening.

"Yeah. We're watching a movie together. I was going to text you guys in the group chat, but Arc said he was busy and you had plans."

"Hmmm? I didn't have plans."

"Oh...Arc," says the campus prince through gritted teeth.

"Busy is busy. If I want to hang out with the gear code, I'll tell you myself."

"Oh, yeaaaaah?"

Jet draws out his voice and plays on his phone. Yeepoon soon catches up and asks the same questions as her boyfriend. It feels more uncomfortable since my second-year peer mentor is the master of lightning up the mood with her lame jokes.

"I didn't expect to see you here. What are the peer mentor and peer mentee doing?"

"P'Arc invited me to a movie," I answer.

"Nice. P'Jet and I will watch a movie as well. Wanna go together?" I nod, but Arc stops everything. He interrupts us with a deadpan face.

"I bought the tickets, Yeepoon."

"Tell us the number of your seats. We'll buy the seats next to you," suggests the fourth year peer mentor.

"It's opera seats. Don't follow us."

"Damn, it's like you're dating."

"P'Arc said I chewed popcorn too loudly, so special seats would be necessary."

"You believe him?"

"Yes?"

Jet puts on a serious face before he cracks a smile. What the hell!?

"Be careful. Arc might knock your head off."

"Wow, I can barely survive these days. I have to be adorable all the time. I didn't even make him buy me a ticket today. I paid half the price in exchange for two buckets of popcorn."

"I said one," Arc cuts in.

"Can it be one huge popcorn, but I'll let you choose between Pepsi and Pepsi?"

"You brat."

"Let's meet each other halfway. You can choose one of the popcorn flavors. I don't like the salty one, though."

"I'm sick of you." Arc looks fed up.

In contrast, the other two's shoulders tremble from laughing. What's so funny about it? Perhaps an argument about popcorn isn't the way of engineering students?

"Okay, I got it. This is nuts," says Jet, laughing.

"..."

"I can see what Arm is truly like today."

"..."

"He's cute as you said, Arc."

Two days later, the angel gear code group chat is bombarded with messages. It's almost midnight, but the couple is still awake. Curious, I tap open the chat to find Yeepoon sending us a screenshot from the engineer cute boy page.

YeepoonJP

Kyaaaaa, even though there aren't many photos of Arm

A lot of people voted for him to be the hottest freshman

Ah... there are two admins. You created the poll without even asking me.

Jet loves Yeepoon so much

I'll go vote. Be right back.

Let me share the link with my friends.

Armm01

Don't vote for me

I'm shy

*ζ*JεJ?*

It's a poll to find out who the hottest engineering freshman is out of the ten guys on the list. Theme, the engineering prince, is on the lead, followed by me somehow.

Wondering who voted for me, I check the names. They're my friends, dorm mates, some seniors, female second-year students, and Arc's friends from the third-year. Wait...

Arc's friends!!

Whoooooa, I feel so honored that I wish to give them kisses on their heads to express my gratitude. Still, that you know who is nowhere to be seen. Well, Arc never cares about things like this.

YeepoonJP

No worries

I'll help vote for you

The angel gear code must not give up!

Given her seriousness, I play along.

I actually talked to Yeepoon yesterday about the project to select the hottest guys from every year, but I didn't expect her to be this fast or even include me.

Jet loves Yeepoon so much

I got all my friends voting for Arm. Only Arc is left.

Arc go vote for your peer mentee!

If you do, more people will vote for Arm.

YeepoonJP

P'Arc, let's do it! Don't leave us on read.

I'm sad

It hurts

A second later, the Superior Prince replies...

Arc_Anoi

Why would I vote for him? He's not all that

He deserves to lose

Armm01

I don't care to win

Who's asking you to vote for me?

How could Arc underestimate Mr. Aniruj's son's genes? If I was hotter than him, I'd show off my girls to him three times a day after each meal.

The group chat keeps buzzing with my fourth year and second-year peer mentors cheering me up. Arc has disappeared, presumably turning his phone off. By the time the fun eases, I'm getting ready for bed. But then, Yeepoon texts me to check the page inbox.

As a responsible admin, I check the poll first. I'm still ranking second, which is unexpectedly incredible.

All the other guys are attractive, even Sand is charming, but I think the prince and princess couple have persuaded more people to vote for me, sending me to a better ranking.

I read some comments and check the inbox. As always, fans and students have left heaps of messages with photos of cute boys to promote. But...

Among those is someone's message.

It was sent ten minutes ago. Driven by my ultimate nosiness, I tap it open.

Anol Pramiphisan

sent a photo

Arc's regular facebook account. Despite his inactive timeline, he keeps himself posted from time to time. This time is different since he sent a photo of me with no context.

Engineer Cute Boy

Ah, is there a problem?

We didn't post any photos. It should be fine.

If he asks me to delete the poll, I'll drive to his place to cuss the hell out of him! Mark my words!

Anol Pramiphisan

The poll on your page

Engineer Cute Boy

What about it?

Anol Pramiphisan

I can't be bothered to vote

Can you vote for the boy in the photo?

Engineer Cute Boy

The boy in the photo? Arm?

We can't do that.

It's unfair.

Anol Pramiphisan

Forget it, then

Engineer Cute Boy

You can leave a message

I'll deliver it as an anonymous comment under the poll

My heart races as I type, unsure of what to expect. Maybe I long for his acceptance. That explains why I'm enthusiastic to know what he wants to say. Of course, Arc doesn't answer immediately. He remains quiet for some time before replying.

The answer changes my view toward... toward him...

Anol Paraminphisan

Tell Arm for me

It's okay if you don't win

You're still the cutest

Chapter 7

Who Is The Most Powerful in the third-year?

What am I supposed to say?

What should I do?

I'm not even certain if I'm talking to the real Arc. It doesn't sound like him. I assume it's one of his friends using his phone.

With that conclusion, I reply by agreeing to post the message. Arc doesn't read it anymore.

The message occupies my mind for a while. I read it over and over until I remember everything. I'll probably dream about it tonight.

Rrrr...!

My ringing phone snaps me back to reality. The name of my second-year peer mentor appears on the screen, and I'm confident the topic will be Arc.

"Hi, phi." I bet she's now wide awake.

[P'Arc, Arm. P'Arcccccccc.] Yeepoon says in excitement. I can imagine her state.

"I think his friends took his phone. It happened before."

[Really? I doubt it. It's P'Arc's style.]

"Ah, I don't know. It's hard to guess his mind." I still have no idea what kind of person Arc is. Does he love, care, take pleasure in messing with me, or get annoyed by me? Yeah, the person that is Mr. Anol.

[Whatever. I'll find out.]

"Get some sleep. I'm worried about you." She might lose sleep from being nosy.

[I can't sleep. P'Jet isn't back yet.]

"Oh, I thought you were together," They conversed well earlier. No wonder they've been dating this long. These two share one mind.

[P'Jet is at the bar, not home. I was going to sleep, but snooping on P'Arc on the page sounds more fun.]

"Do whatever you want."

[If you don't post it, I'll do it. You might get more votes that way.]

"Up to you."

[Good night, my beloved nong.]

Ughhh!! She's teasing me. It doesn't make me feel good at all.

"Good night."

I hang up and focus on the page that's continuously gaining attention. More people are voting for the boys, but the ranking stays the same. I have nearly a thousand votes less than the engineering prince.

Around five minutes later, Yeepoon leaves a comment under the poll.

Engineer Cute Boy: *Someone sent us a message for Arm "It's okay if you don't win.*

You're still the cutest." /Admin Moe

I gain more votes shortly after and the inbox is filled with more encouraging messages for the other boys. The comments exceed five hundred in a few moments.

I wonder if these people don't sleep. They've been voting like crazy when it's supposed to be over after casting one vote. A subtle war begins when Warm, the third-year campus prince, comments for Theme, leading him to gain thousands of votes more than me.

Warm Wanarat: *No need to vote for Theme. I'll do it myself.*

Wooow, he's going all out the way normal people can never copy. Arc would never do that with his perplexed mind. Look at that couple. Although they were from different departments and not in the same code, they fell in love during the contest and agreed to date on the campus stage.

Two attractive people being together is impactful. Now look at me. I'm super handsome, yet girls never approach me. I don't understand.

I thought the poll on the cute boy page would be a way to bring attention to me. I don't care about my rank as long as someone gets interested in me.

Hopefully...

I continue my life as usual the next day. I have breakfast at the dormitory cafeteria, listen to my friends praising my third-year mentor, then head to the department building.

Arc is nowhere to be found today. As I said, he shows up from time to time. If you want to see him, you need luck aside from his number since he rarely picks up. It's like he created social media accounts because everyone else did. Is he active online? Not quite.

Arc's instagram account has been inactive for some time, and his latest action on his timeline on facebook was months ago. Besides his direct message on the fan page inbox last night, his account is like a haunted forest.

Not to mention the possibility that it was his friend.

Engineer Cute Boy

We did a poll for the first year yesterday. Today will be for the second and third-year. You can only choose one hot guy each. The poll will be closed on the tenth. / Admin Moe

Yeepoon creates two more polls with then sophomores and ten juniors. Arc is excluded, obviously. We, his peer mentees, know we'd be damned otherwise.

But something is out of control. Forced by the fans, we have no choice but to add Anol Paraminphisan to the list. He's immediately in the lead, leaving others far behind.

Yeepoon screenshots the poll and sends it to our group chat. Arc rapidly takes action with no indulgence.

Arc Paraminphisan: *Please remove me from the list.*

At that second, the Superior Prince's fans flood the comment section. My dorm mates chime in, even more passionate than the girls.

'I want to vote for P'Arc. Please let me do it.'

'You're my idol. We electrical boys will vote for you.'

'God is higher than the Superior Prince, and yet...God surrenders to you.'

'Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa, I'll vote for P'Arc!'

'Newborn babies go waaaaaah. But I went Aaaaaaarc when I was born.'

'Don't remove him. I want to vote for him so bad. We can barely see him in real life. At least let us see his name.'

'A photo of a handsome boy.'

How challenging. They even posted a photo of Arc. It must bug him, given the Superior Prince replies to the post in a few minutes.

Anol Paraminphisan: *Don't vote for me. Go vote for someone else.*

Tons of students reply to his comments. One of them is Jet. He must have too much free time to join in on this.

Jet Jessada: *Give us a name. I'll tell my friends to vote for him.*

Anol Paraminphisan: *Go vote for Arm. He looks stupid.*

Jet Jassada: *I'm talking about the third-year guys.*

Anol Paraminphisan: *I'm talking about the freshman.*

Ughhhhh, why did I get dragged into this? Who wouldn't be influenced by you if you went this hard?

In a few minutes, I nearly beat Theme, the engineering prince. The funny thing is besides the students from the same department, even outsiders are voting for me.

Arc is indeed Arc.

Yeepoon removes Arc from the list as requested. Can you believe that the poll is no longer the hot topic here? They're all swarming in the comment section to talk to the tall guy in the blink of an eye. The comment requesting to remove his name receives over seven hundred replies.

I give up. I won't fight him, knowing I'll lose.

Arc replies to one and vanishes like he's never existed, not even responding to the group chat. I put down my phone like him to divert my attention to something else.

Rrrr...!

My phone rings again. I glance at the screen, see the Superior Prince's name, and take a deep breath. I pick up the call with reluctance.

"Hey, who's this? Is this P'Aaaaaarc?"

He told me to ask, so I did without fail.

[No.]

"Who is thissss?" What a liar. I recognize his voice. Not many have a voice that sounds like a gagging buffalo.

[Your dad.]

"Hey, hey, the disrespect."

[You're fucking with me.]

"What's up?"

[I don't have practice tomorrow. Don't show your face at the soccer field.]

"Wow, great. I'll finally have time to hang out with my friends."

[That's all.]

"Wait. Thank you for telling people to vote for me. My votes are increasing."

[Are you proud to gain votes because of me?]

"Of course. It's not like you're kind enough to root for everyone."

[I'm not rooting for you.] His voice is absolutely emotionless. I know he doesn't love me and that the message yesterday was not from him but from one of his friends.

"Yeah. Whatever. At least more people know me now. Just wait and see. I'll show off my lover to you."

Silence on the other end. Not knowing what to say, I call his name.

"P'Arc?"

[No one will hit on you.] He finally speaks.

"Why not?"

[They'll lose interest in you when they see me.]

"Wow, you'll beat me with your face?"

[Ugh!]

"..."

[I'll beat others with my face.]

Ah...

I don't understand the implication. Arc hangs up before I can ask. What the hell?

"Let's play claw machines this evening. I want a Pikachu plushie for my room," Pipo starts a conversation as we wait for the professor in the classroom.

Pipo, you bastard...

"Your room is full of Pikachus. You still need more?" I ask, wearily.

"You have no idea. Pikachus have various species."

"Huh?"

"They're from different factories."

“Daaaamn, are you going to get all of it?”

“Yeah, that’s my goal.”

Unbelievable. Why the fuck is he studying engineering? He should study claw machines to make a living.

“Ask Sand. I’ll go if he goes.” I pass the buck to the popular former child star.

“Whatever you want, Po. I don’t mind, but…”

“What?”

“Let me see this girl at the nursing department first. I’ll catch up with you later.”

“What?!!”

Everything happened so fast. I noticed Sand was on his phone more than usual, but I didn’t think he would be pursuing a girl seriously.

“What’s going on?” Pipo asks, his eyes popping in disbelief. He must have been so obsessed with plushies, he couldn’t keep up with reality, while I was too busy fighting with my third-year peer mentor.

“I like her, so I’m hitting on her,” explains Sand, his expression somehow the opposite of happy.

That’s disturbing. Did love make him that uncomfortable?

“How did you meet her?”

“On Facebook. She’s P’Arc’s mutual friend.”

“Who is she?”

“Our senior.”

“Whooooooooa, so that’s your type?”

“She’s in her third year, a nursing student. Super cute.”

“Yeah. Whatever.”

“But she doesn’t like me.”

“Hold up.” How can girls not like Sand? He’s good looking, a former child star in Chompoo Araya’s prime time. Why doesn’t that girl like him?

“Wanna see her photos?” asks Sand.

“Yes.”

Sand taps on his phone for a moment before holding it out to us proudly. Holy crap, he’s into the nursing princess. I must give it to him. I can never beat him since I’ll never find a girl at that level.

“I’m jealous. Why doesn’t it happen to me? So jealous.”

Pipo whines, contradicting his barbaric looks. Single people must take care of themselves.

“Why are you jealous? She doesn’t like me.”

“Step up your game.”

“It would’ve been better had she not had a crush on my idol.”

“Fuck!!” Pipo and I swear at the same time. “You mean P’Arc?”

“Yeah. I don’t know what to do. He’s my idol, but she’s my crush.”

“But P’Arc doesn’t seem to be into anyone. Rest assured, Sand. P’Arc wouldn’t step in your way since he has no interest in her,” I comfort my friend.

I get hyped up as there’s something to carry out today.

With my privilege as the Superior Prince’s peer mentee and one of his few friends on facebook, I spend my evening snooping him since Arc has no practice. Meanwhile Sand and Pipo are joyfully playing the claw machine.

The nursing student is Waan. She wasn’t the campus princess in her year, losing to Jitti, but her cuteness is still unbeatable.

After two hours of finding information, I know nothing. Arc ignores all his tagged posts and only interacts with his silly, cheeky group of friends.

I assume Waan must chat with my third-year peer mentor with direct messages or on LINE, and they're following each other on IG. I guess I have to take matters into my own hands for my friend.

"It's bugging me."

"What's wrong, Arm? Come play with us," says Sand, the concerned guy, not Pipo. Instead of being stressed, he leaves me being nosy all alone.

"I have to find out if P'Arc is talking to P'Waan."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'll spy on them. You just keep hitting on her." Humans are easily tempted. She might be taken if he lowers his guard, especially when his rival is the Superior Prince. The possibility of winning is already low.

"I will."

"Fight on, Sand. Don't give up!"

"Is it you or me who has a crush?" Am I wrong to be worried about my friend? "Come play with us. Leave it all for tomorrow."

"Very well."

I stand up to join my gang to get a new species of Pikachu. Getting hooked, each of us spends hundreds of baht only to successfully obtain one plushie. We fucking suck.

We return to the dormitory with empty wallets and call our parents in the morning asking for money.

In the late morning, Arc texts me to say there'll be no practice for a week without explaining the reason, and I don't ask, knowing his nature.

But then something happens!

A bomb hits our gang this evening. Sand scrolls through his crush's timeline on IG and sees something he shouldn't have.

"This is bad," he says uneasily, holding out his phone to us. Waan posted a photo of a dish with a sweet caption 'Nice to see you,' and checked in the location.

"It could be her friend."

"Right," Pipo and I chime in. "She didn't tag anyone."

"Really?"

Sand snatches his phone back, scrolls some more and more, and places it back down.

"Holy shit!"

I swear aloud. From the location on Waan's post, Sand looked for more photos checked in the restaurant and stumbled across a photo taken by a student on their account. The person in the photos is Arc.

And Arc and Waan are sitting together. Noooooo. Sand, are you okay?

I want to run off to buy him a carton of beer, while another part of me wishes to curse the hell out of my third-year peer mentor. He skipped practice for a girl, huh? Unable to voice my true feelings, I say "They're friends, you're overthinking it."

Fuck! You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see they're definitely dating. What should I do? My friend has no chance.

"No need to console me," Sand mumbles with his head down and eyes fixed on the photo. I want to throw his phone away.

"Let's go, then."

"...?"

"Let's see for yourself so you know what to do next."

"Is it a good idea?" I know he's dying to go there.

"Yes. Trust me."

We drive to the restaurant near the university in a flash, praying they're still there, or it'll be a waste of time and gas with no answer.

We march into the restaurant. Spotting the back of the target a short distance away, I feel relieved. I might as well quit university and become James Bond 010.

We sit quite far from our target but within the observable range. Pipo adjusts our positions, volunteering to turn his back on those two. Sand and I face them with notebooks covering our faces to avoid getting caught. Damn, we are shitty spies.

“What would you like to have?” A server walks to our table with menus,

“I’d like this one. What about you guys?”

“The same as you.”

I point at the menu randomly and return it to her before focusing on the tall guy. Arc is wicked. Publicly talking with the nursing princess without fear of ruining his popularity.

“It looks like a date. I guess I’ll step away for my idol,” my best friend mutters, fully in his emotional mode.

“Don’t overthink it! They’re friends!”

“Friends, my ass.” The way the girl giggles indicates her shyness. It doesn’t seem platonic, yet I keep comforting my friend.

“Friends do that. Girls and boys can be friends.”

“Really?”

I continue observing them. Seeing Waan add food to Arc’s plate, I console my friend in worry that he’ll feel hurt.

“Friends do that too.”

“Really?”

Ten minutes later...

“Friends take photos together, too.” Even though they cling to each other like twins, Sand repeats his question reluctantly.

“Really?”

Five minutes later...

“Shit!” My spaghetti almost goes out of my nostrils. The other customers stare at me, so I plummet under the table to prevent being the center of attention.

Arc ruffled her hair. Given he doesn't do that to everyone, they must be a thing.

The relationship between the Superior Prince and the nursing princess is no longer the concern here. I'm the unlucky one right now! Bummer.

Someone accidentally knocked a glass over. My white student shirt is all dirty and the juice drips on my head under the table. Fuck! Today is the worst. Dad, I want to go home...

“Arm, get up. My idol is asking for the bill,” The suspicious guy pokes my shoulder. Sand looks no different, his pants soaked all over, yet he pays no attention, his eyes locked on his crush.

Once they leave, we can finally breathe.

I scramble up the chair, drenched in blueberry juice from my head to my waist. Pipo is the only one who's clean. Why do I suddenly want to cry?

Everyone is looking at us!

It hurts more than when I fell off the stage during the selection.

“They left together. It's over,” mumbles the boy beside me. I feel bad for him. One is his crush and the other is his idols.

“Boys and girls can be friends. Plus, I've never seen him going out with anyone.”

“P'Waan.”

“No. I'll ask him for you.”

“He'll say it's none of your business.”

“I don't care, he tells me off all the time. Come on. Get a grip. Don't die yet.”

“Okay.”

“But we should leave now. I look like crap,” I say, studying my body wearily. Agreeing, my friends wave to the server for the bill. I have no clue if we'll be charged for all the mess.

“Let's split the bill,” I tell them, reaching for my wallet.

The server cuts in. "Someone paid for you."

"Pardon?" I ask in surprise.

"Someone paid for your food and beverages. Just earlier."

"Who is it?"

"The gentleman from table nineteen. Ah... he also left a jacket for you." She hands me an engineering jacket. Confused, we start guessing.

"Where's table nineteen?"

Nobody knows, including me. I flip the jacket over to see the student code on the sleeve which is oddly familiar. The code ends with 0613.

"Zero, six, one, three..."

"Shit!"

"He knew we were spying on him!"

Anon owns all of Mr. Anol's possessions. The shabby workshop shirt, engineering jacket, apartment key, calculus book, everything except his love and care.

I returned to the dormitory yesterday, all dirty. Thanks to the jacket, I didn't draw much attention. I couldn't bring myself to text Arc or to thank him, regardless. Since I was spying on him, I got too thin skinned to talk to him after getting caught.

"Arm, P'Waan deleted that photo."

My roommate announces as I play on my phone.

"How come? Spill."

"She deleted the photo she posted yesterday. I don't know why. The photo of Arc that someone took is also gone." Woowoow, he dealt with all of it. Perhaps they want to date in secret.

"So, what's going on?"

I don't know. P'Waan posted a new photo, all emotional."

"Is it that bad?"

"Yeah. I think P'Arc isn't into her."

If that's true, it means Arc is so hot that he can be picky. Even the nursing princess was rejected. I'm jealous.

"You have a chance, then."

"I don't know. I guess I'll keep going. I won't give up since the Superior Prince already stepped back," Sand concludes.

Ten minutes later, I play on my phone on my bed. Someone knocks on the door a while later, and I turn toward the noise. My dear friend, Pipó, presses his face against the doorframe and speaks excitedly,

"Red. Tonight's Might Red!"

"Who's on their period?"

"Stupid joke." I just love cracking jokes despite how lame.

Ignoring my weary face, Pipó continues. "Let's go to the bar tonight. The big match is today." I spring up and sit cross legged right away.

"I don't think I can go. Arc scolded me last time, and we caused trouble yesterday." To be honest, I don't dare to ask for his permission.

"Why, Arm? I can't live without you." Listen to him. He just wants more people to split the bill with.

"Who else is going?"

"Our dorm mates. No one will start a fight."

"I... I'll have to pass. For real," I insist in fear of getting kicked by my third-year peer mentor, though I actually want to go so bad.

Pipó presses on. "Come on, we're not going to Bang-on Pochana this time."

"I'm not going anywhere."

"What are you so scared of? Some sophomores are going with us. They can take care of you."

"They're the worst."

“Trust me. Tonight will be fine. P’Arc won’t know,” Pipo and Sand take turns persuading me.

I wish to roll my eyes out of my eye sockets. Wasn’t it you who enticed me to block Arc and then disappeared when I was in trouble because of it, leaving me to deal with everything alone? I will not waver this time.

“Why wouldn’t he know? He has eyes in all the bars.”

“I’ll tell the sophomores to keep it a secret.”

“What if P’Arc calls?”

“Run to the car. It’s soundproof.”

“What if he video calls?”

“Set up the scene. I do that all the time. Trust me.”

After a long argument, I lose to Pipo and Sand’s persuasion.

Around nine, we all showered and dressed. I proudly wear the eighteen time champion shirt and head to a bistro in the area mainly frequented by men because it’s full of bars broadcasting soccer on all occasions.

“The freshmen are here! Go all out!”

The sophomores booked four large tables. Everyone pours drinks and sips while watching soccer as I coolly gulp water.

Rrr...!

My phone rings in an hour. I take my phone from my pocket and see someone’s name on the screen. Holy shit! The devil is calling!!

“Pipo, Pipo, you bastard,” I shout in his ear, earning a scowl.

“What?”

“P’Arc is calling!”

“Mm...Huh?!” Pipo’s eyes widen. He springs up, dragging me and Sand to the parking lot.

The phone keeps ringing, and it's a video call. My two best friends work hard laying out a mattress in the backseat with a blanket to pretend this is our dormitory.

Daaaaamn, why do I need to go this far? I'm not his girlfriend. Why does he care?

Boohoo...

"Arm, lie down."

"It's dark. Wouldn't P'Arc get suspicious?"

"Just tell him that you turned off the lights. Good luck, pal."

BAM!! They slam the car door shut. I curl under the blanket and answer the call.

"Mm, P'Arc... What's the matter? I'm about to sleep." Is it smooth? My voice sounds convincing, but I'm uncertain about my face because of the dark.

Am I embarrassed? Hell, yes. I have no other choice, though.

[It's just ten. Are you already in bed?] Arc replies.

"Yeah. I turned off the lights. What's the matter?"

[Nothing. I'm just wondering. I saw a bunch of freshmen watching soccer at the bar and thought you were there.]

"Ugh, I didn't go. Why would I disobey you?"

[Good. You'd be dealt with if you got caught.]

Jeez... I hope that day never comes. I've been a good boy. I hope the holy spirits watch over me.

"I won't do it." I speak in a firm voice, looking at the tall guy on the screen. Eh... the place he's at... It looks familiar like I've seen it somewhere. I can't help but ask.

"Where are you?"

[Me? In a parking lot.]

"Which one?"

[I don't know. But your friend's car is here.]

"Huh?!"

Before I utter another word, the car door opens, letting the music and light flood in. I scramble out of the blanket and face my third-year peer mentor in a Manchester United shirt staring at me with unreadable eyes.

“Hey, uh, I...”

“Were you so sleepy that you slept here?” His frosty voice makes me feel like crying.

“I’m sorry.”

“You’re fucking naughty. Come out!”

“Please don’t do anything to me. Boohoo.”

“I said, come out.”

Unable to argue, I get out of the car compliantly and stand in silence for a minute to mourn myself. Arc flicks my forehead, bringing me back to reality.

“How did you get here?”

“My friends are here. Why shouldn’t I be?”

“But my friends said you...” I shut up, realizing I’m about to blame them.

“What?”

“Nothing. B...But can I stay? The match is getting fun,” More importantly, it’s a match between Liverpool and Manchester United. I want to push my team toward their dream.

“You dare to come. Why would I dare send you back? Get back inside!” Arc’s words paint a smile on my face. Extremely hyped up, I follow the tall guy back in the bistro.

The third-year students occupy all the seats we left, so I unavoidably squeeze next to my third-year peer mentor. My best friends are smiling sheepishly at their idol, supposedly feeling guilty for helping me lie and set up the scene.

“Let’s make a guess. What will the score be?” Asks Arc’s nerdy friend. I think his name is Pond, known as the one hundred point boy.

He didn’t earn the nickname for being a skilled playboy, he just got a hundred points on all quizzes.

“Ask Arm.” Copp, why the hell are you putting me on the spot?

“No. You guys will mock me again.”

“We won’t this time. Tell us.”

“Fine. Liverpool will definitely win against Man-U,” I say, fucking proud of Liverpool despite the lack of their champion trophies.

“What about the score?”

“Maybe seven to zero.”

“Woooooow, Arc, your peer mentee is exaggerating,” shouts one of the Superior Prince’s best friends. This one is Bloon, charismatic with his wealth. I often wish I was his peer mentee.

“I’m not exaggerating. I’m being objective.”

“It’s like Liverpool uses cones to play soccer. They wouldn’t only be the champion in Europe with that score. Well! They’d be the champions of the universe.”

“I mean business.”

“Oh, so you’re ready to lose,” Arc joins.

“I’m your peer mentee. How could you? Unbelievable.”

These assholes!!

They made me guess and said I exaggerated. But when I refused to guess, they pressed me. These third-year jerks are so unpredictable that I can’t keep up.

We continue drinking while watching soccer. A few moments later, my phone chimes. I read the message and truly understand Sand’s wish. He wants me to gain information about Wann and my peer mentor. Let’s go!

“Hey, I coincidentally saw you at the restaurant yesterday. I wanted to greet you but decided not to interrupt your time with the girl,” I say, observing Arc’s expression.

“Don’t forget to return my jacket.”

He dodges the topic. What a pain.

“I know, I know. I’ll return it to you tomorrow. Who’s that girl, by the way?”

"Did you wash my jacket?"

"I did. It smells good. Answer the question."

"What was the question?"

"Who's the girl from yesterday?"

"The nursing princess."

"I know that." Well... it's not a secret to unearth. What unearth is your fucking answer.

How troublesome.

"What kind of answer do you expect?"

"Is she your girlfriend, just a friend, or someone you're talking with?"

"It's loud in here. I'll tell you when we leave."

"What? I'm leaving with my friends."

"I'll give you a ride."

"No, thanks."

"Then I won't answer." I'm going to cryyyyyyyyyyy.

I lose to his stubbornness in the end. What is a peer mentee to do when he, deep down, wonders what their relationship is? At least Sand will be able to figure out what to do next.

The soccer night is lively as the cheer reverberates as the ball hits the net over and over.

The fans of Manchester United holler up with joy after the star player scores a hat trick.

Manchester United is in the lead by three to zero.

My boy Solanke walks with his head down in the middle of the soccer field.

"It's okay to lose."

"Boohoo..."

"You always lose, anyway."

You motherfucker!!

The match ends with four to zero. I want to write to the football club to change the manager. Not because the team lost this match, but I got embarrassed from saying they'd win by seven to zero.

The score almost reaches seven, but the winning team isn't Liverpool. Good grief...

The guys won't stop mocking me.

The match is over past midnight. We paid for the booze and split up. But then, Bloom, one of the Superior Prince's friends, speaks.

"Arc, wanna go to another place? There's a bar open until morning." The older guys never stop at one place, always moving to the next. They're the best at seeking alcohol.

"No."

"The girls are the bomb, I'm telling you."

"Maybe next time."

"Shit, are you ditching your friends?"

Arc rises to his full height and tugs me up.

"I'm not free tonight."

"..."

"A kid needs to go back before one."

"..."

"Bye. See you tomorrow."

The tall guy leads me out all the way amid the teasing, I don't know why...

Why would they tease us?

"So, who's that girl to you?"

I shoot the question as soon as we are in the car.

Arc remains quiet for a moment with his hands on the wheel and eyes on the road, though his smirk is asking for a slap. Judging by his mannerism, he's about to start a war of nerves.

"Hey, don't leave me hanging."

"Tell me why you want to know so much."

"Sand, my friend, has a crush."

"On me?"

"What? He likes P'Waan." Who would have a crush on you? A pain in the ass like you would drive one crazy.

"What do you want me to say?" asks Arc.

"Just tell me the truth."

"The truth is she likes me."

"Ooooooh, what about you? Do you like her?"

"No. I like someone else."

My heart races for a reason. It's my first time feeling love in his voice. How strange. Arc never showed a sign of being into someone. My other peer mentors also said that, but now I heard it from Arc himself.

The Superior Prince has a heart.

"Who is it? Do I know that person?"

"Yeah."

Ooooooh, this is getting interesting.

"Who is it? Give me a hint. I'll keep my lips sealed."

"That person? Stupid and a bit nosy."

"..."

"Just like you."

I discovered Arc's biggest secret yesterday.

He seemed smart, yet he fell for a stupid person. Haha.

I wonder who that unlucky person is, but I'll leave his personal matter to him. One thing is for sure: Sand can hit on Waan freely without the Superior Prince in his way.

To celebrate Arc no longer being his love rival, my best friend takes me to eat Lod Chong at a famous stall near the university to thank me for my nosiness.

Yeepoon texts me after that, inviting me to have shaved ice together as if worried the dessert failed to fill my stomach. And I never say no to free food.

After saying goodbye to both of my best friends, I head to the shaved ice place.

“Nong Arm is here. Yeah~~” The lovey dovey couple is there, already enjoying a bowl of shaved ice. I don’t know whose the other one is, but I guess it’s for me.

“Hey, P’Jet, P’Yeepoon.”

“Hey, come sit,” says the fourth year peer mentor. I sit opposite to him, look at the shaved ice cream before me, and gulp several times, I’m seriously gluttonous.

“Go ahead and order. Anything you want.” My second-year peer mentor places the menu in front of me.

“Oh, whose is this?”

“P’Arc’s.”

“Huh? He’s here?”

“Yeah, he went to the restroom. He’ll be right back.”

The tall guy appears with that bad boy looks today, his new workshop shirt standing out.

“Ooooooh, you’re wearing a new shirt,” I point out. Arc pushes my head and sits beside me with an awfully bored face before taunting me.

“You’re still barking after losing yesterday.”

“Someday I’ll win. Mark my words and wait to see me rise.”

“Oh, sure.”

I got all dramatic. What was that weak response?

“What will I get if I win next time?”

“Suggest.”

“You must wear a Liverpool shirt for a day. How about that?”

“Easy peasy. Bring it on! But what if you lose?”

“I’ll wear a Man United shirt and post it on IG.”

“You said it.”

“I’m a man of my word.”

“Deal!”

“Please don’t fight. What are you going to order, nong Arm?” Yeepoon steps in, like usual. I point at the melon shaved ice on the menu and wait for it to be served. The prince and princess couple then start a conversation about the hot topic online. I learned it this afternoon.

“Arm, do you know you won the pull on the engineer cute boy page? Yeah~~” says Yeepoon, wiggling happily.

“Ah, I saw it. My friends showed it to me. That’s insane.”

I won because of Arc. I wouldn’t have stood a chance against Theme, the engineering prince.

“That’s why we wanted to celebrate with this meal.”

“Wow, thank you.” Anon will not decline. He loves free food.

“Well, for the record...the winners will be set as the profile picture for a month each in turn.”

“Huh? I didn’t know that.”

“The fans of the page requested it, and the admin agreed.” Ugh! I knew you initiated it.

“Who’s the admin?” asks Jet.

“Well... the admin is the admin.”

“It’s you, right?”

I gape at my fourth year peer mentor’s words. What’s going on? Are we exposed?

“P’ Jet, I didn’t mean to hide it from you. Didn’t we talk about this last night?”

“Yeah, but I want my peer mentees to know. That’s why the page is full of my photos and Arm’s. One of us is behind all of this,” spews the campus prince, making Yeepoon swallow. I have no idea what else Jet found out, but I doubt he knows I’m the other admin.

“How did you know?” asks Arc.

Arc fixes his sharp eyes on his peer mentor, unaffected by the revelation.

“I used Poon’s laptop last night and saw the page left open, so I found out.”

“You’re the admin?” Arc tilts his head slightly, staring at Yeepoon to pressure here. This feels like an interrogation room.

“Yeah. I also saw the direct messages.”

“What direct messages?”

“You said Arm was cute.”

I turn to Arc, who remains calm.

“That was my friend.”

I knew it. Why would Arc compliment me?

“Which friend?” asks Jet instantly, tensing up the atmosphere.

“One of the guys.”

“You mean Copp, Pond, and Bloom?”

“Yeah.”

“Hmmmmm, really?”

“What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“Gotcha. Your friends hung out with me at the bar that night.”

“...”

“Who else could’ve sent those messages if not you?”

Chapter 8

The Highly Destructive Power Attack

I'm unsure if we're eating shaved ice or catching the liar.

The angel gear code always has a surprise. This time, it's Arc's turn to be finished by Jet.

What exactly happened? Hmmm... explain yourself!

"Don't shut your mouth, Arc. Who the fuck did it?" the fourth year peer mentor presses on. We lock our eyes on the silent tall guy without blinking. Unabashed, Arc keeps his composure as if nothing has ever happened.

"Yeah, I did it."

Calm like a river...

Huh?! What did he say?!

"I admit he's cute, but he's annoying as fuck."

Cute?

Arc said I was cute!

I can't believe it, but the way the engineering princess gapes convinces me I didn't mishear it. Arc did say that. I don't understand why he wouldn't tell me straightforwardly and blamed his friend instead.

"I knew it. What do you think of Arm exactly?" Jet keeps pressing on. I suddenly get chills.

"Nothing. He's my peer mentee."

"I know that. But you always acted like you were annoyed by him. Why did you want to help him all of a sudden?"

"I don't want our gear code to be humiliated. It'd be embarrassing if we lost."

"That's a lie."

"Ugh!"

"You could've sent him encouragement in the group chat. Why did you do it behind his back? What a stubborn guy."

"I don't want him to get cocky. He should stay humble."

"Oh, yeeeeeeeah?"

"Are you done? I'll eat and leave," Arc switches up the subject, averting his gaze.

"No."

"Go ahead and eat, then. I'm going to the restroom."

"You just went there."

"Can't I go again?" The tall guy stands up without waiting for the fourth year peer mentor's reply. He stride to the back of the restaurant where the restroom is, leaving the prince-princess couple smiling at each other.

"P'Jet, P'Arc is acting weird," I mumble rhetorically. His personality is hard to stomach, as we all know. Totally unpredictable.

"It's not weird at all. He's always like this," says Jet, still grinning."

"How's that normal?"

"He's normally like this to you."

"I don't get it."

"He'll explain it to you one day when he wants to."

What an impractical answer. I give up and devour my shaved ice. The tall guy soon returns but shows no indication of finishing his full bowl.

"I paid for everyone. I'm off."

"What the hell, Arc? Come eat. Where are you rushing off to?"

"My friend called."

"Which friend?"

"You don't need to know. Bye."

"Yeah. Whatever." Jet waves him off. We stare at the Superior Prince marching in another direction. Before he reaches the door, Jet shouts "Arc! Arc!"

The tall guy turns around swiftly and asks him in an irked voice "What?"

"That's the wrong door. It's the kitchen. The entrance is that way."

"Right."

"Did you get so shy you couldn't function?"

Frowning, Arc saves his breath and spins toward the opposite door. Once he's out of sight, the couple bursts out laughing in satisfaction.

Arc is really weird. I think... he's cuter than usual today.

There's an assembly for the freshmen in the evening. I don't want to go since it's a waste of my precious time. Yes, I'd rather play games with my friends at the dormitory.

Everyone gathers in the Engineering Hall. The hall buzzes with questions, including ones from my gang.

"Let's make a bet. What's the purpose of this gathering?" Pipo starts.

"Sports day. I put two baht," says Sand.

Fucking idiot.

"We talked about sports day. I think it's an activity in the department. I heard the seniors say we had to clean the gear space." I guess. They nod along.

"Hey, guys. We're not here to talk about the gear space cleaning as you might've heard."

"Oh." Shit. My face shatters.

"Boooo, Arm, you shouldn't have said anything."

"Damn it."

"Poor you."

"She must take responsibility for shattering my face."

"Stupid."

“All right, all right. Silence.” The hall slowly quietens because the fourth year students at the front refuse to speak for some time until we cooperate. “Here’s the thing, we got selected to host the engineer friendship festival this year.”

“Ooooooooooooooh.” The crowd stirs.

I scratch my head. What is this festival that everyone is excited about?

“Many of you might not know. This is an annual festival hosted by the chain universities in turn. There are five universities, but this year is special because there are three more, so eight in total.”

“Wooooooooooooow.”

I get goosebumps. Plenty of engineering girls from other universities will be here. The thought excites me, expanding my imagination. The senior voice snaps back at me.

“There will be friendship sports, a popularity contest, a cheer competition, including academic activities. Today, we will assign duties to the freshmen.”

“...” Everyone goes silent in anticipation.

“The first-year prince and princess will take care of the popularity contest. We already have cheerleaders. Now, we need first-year volunteers for each sport. You can apply at the back of the hall after the assembly. As for the cheering team, it’ll be all freshmen. Those without duties must practice the cheering chants.”

Fuck. The ones who never participate in anything have one option. I suck at sports and cheerleading, and I’m not handsome enough to be prince of the department. Maybe it’s great to be useful at times, though I wish I didn’t have to do anything.

“Hold up, don’t discuss it yet. We have another important matter,” the senior continues. “Since we’re the host this year, it’s our tradition to play buddies. The freshmen and seniors must take care of their buddies from the other universities. The student association has paired you all up. Please check your buddies on the department page on Facebook.”

Everyone whips out their phone simultaneously as the senior goes on.

“Aside from taking care of your buddies, you must be good hosts. There’ll be free time to show your buddies around the university or any place of your choice. No bars are allowed this year. You can switch to cafés.”

More details are announced, undecipherable due to the freshmen chattering away drowning the sound from the speaker. Eventually, the seniors let us apply for our duties.

Of course, Sand, Pipo, and I can do nothing but... join the cheering team.

Well... I must practice moving pom-poms, banners and lit signs to the rhythm. It’ll be loads of fun with less time to do our silly activities.

“Did you check the hint of your buddy?” asks Yo, the gang leader of the engineering boys.

“Nah.”

“You’ll get a cute girl for sure.” He pats my shoulder and walks off.

Frowning, I scroll through my phone while following my best friends. Sand and Pipo are grumbling since their hints clearly imply their buddies are boys. I mean, there isn’t a large number of engineering girls. As for me...

‘The name is nature, vast and on top of the world.’

“What? Is her name Himalayas?” I mumble. Pipo smacks my head.

“Ugh, dumbass. The hint is fucking obvious. In nature and on top of the world. It’s the sun.”

“Sun?”

“Well, what else is high?”

“The clouds?”

“The fucking clouds are vast?”

“A bunch of clouds is vast, idiot.”

“Anything else?”

“The Sky.”

Sand's answer stuns me. Daaaaamn, my buddy must be a girl, then. Aw, I'm so fucking excited. Whoever is named after the sky must be very cute.

Aside from the hints, seniors have provided us the names of the universities and student codes to help us identify our buddies. We have one day before the official open ceremony in the evening. My attention is no longer on my buddy but on the announced cheering schedule.

On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in the evening, my gang and I will lose our freedom.

I have to inform Arc, my haunting ghost, about this, or he'll rampage when I don't show up at the soccer field during practice.

I call his number-saved on my contact list- and wait forever until he answer in a fucking dead voice.

[Hey.]

"Are you busy?"

[Yes.]

"Okay, I'll call you later."

[Not anymore. What's up?] What a pain in the ass...

"About the engineer friendship festival we're hosting, I'm part of the cheering team. I have to practice Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evening, so I won't be able to see you at the soccer field."

[Okay.]

"Are you playing soccer that day?"

[No.]

"Oh, why? You don't love your department at all."

[Can't be bothered. Playing for sports day is already fucking exhausting. Why would I do that too? Is that all?]

"Ah..." I'm about to hang up when I hear a chatter on the other end getting louder. I can't help asking "Where are you? It's so loud."

[At the front of the classroom.]

“Huh? What are you doing there?”

[A presentation. My friends are waiting.]

Holy shit, why didn't he tell meeeeeeee? He said he wasn't busy.

“Hang up. I'm sorry. I didn't know. Wah...”

[The professor isn't here, yet. It's fine.]

“Fine, my ass. Damn it! I'm hanging up. Go do your presentation.”

[Mm...]

The call ends with my face numb. I feel bad for interrupting him because I thought it was a free period for third-year civil engineering students. I was wrong for not making sure of it. Sigh.

But the fact that he picked up the call was perplexing. He could've ignored it. The Superior Prince is so hard to read.

My hectic life begins on Monday evening. My dorm mates and I gather at the department stand after classes and receive a pile of paper each. It contains details about the songs and complicated patterns for transforming the team into letters.

The whole thing makes me feel like fainting. Do I have to live like this for a month?

I'm going to cry.

But when I look at the seniors building props for the performance, the support staff working hard, and the setting team running back and forth around the area, I feel like a jerk. This is a department activity. I should help if I can.

Says the one who skipped cheering activity. Haaaaaa.

“Do I have to sing and chant for a month? I'm fucking miserable,” whines my best friend.

“Just do it. It'll be over soon enough.”

“I could've spent these times hitting on P'Waan.”

“Oh, I've been meaning to ask how it's going between you and her. Is she starting to open her heart or still playing hard to get?”

“She’s nice to me, like, slowly accepting me.” Sand looks significantly better than the other day. I assume the gloomy love is brightening.

“Great.”

“Let’s go to the bar tonight. It’s UEFA,” Pipo suggests, turning my head.

“Have you not learned? P’Arc scolded the hell out of me last time. Let’s watch the match with the guys at the dorm.” Plus, my anticipation is low if it’s not a championship match or one with Liverpool. It won’t be easy to persuade me.

“Guys, keep it down. We’ll practice the first song today. We’ll drum the rhythm for you...” The high pitched voice cuts in on our conversation before our sorrowful life begins.

It goes like this on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday repeatedly.

Thankfully, Arc is kind enough to allow me to rest on Tuesday and Thursday. I don’t even go out on weekends, spending all my time lying in my room, active only on LINE with my friends and the angel gear code.

My photo is currently the profile picture of the engineer cute boy page with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Yeepoon said the profile picture wouldn’t be changed until the end of the engineer friendship festival. Numerous girls in the university and from the others will undoubtedly fall for me.

I’m super proud of myself that I want to call my father to boast so he can brag to his colleagues about how hot his son is.

Time flies. Since classes and cheering practice took most of my time, I haven’t seen Arc in two weeks. He also hasn’t been active in the group chat. Nobody knows how he’s doing.

The Superior Prince first-year fanboys haven’t kept themselves posted as well because they’ve been stuck with practice like me.

The day has finally come. The day I free myself from labor and dash into Yo’s room with enthusiasm.

“Arm is here. Sit down. The match is starting.”

Yo's room is the den of us electrical engineering students. We squeeze on his bed and glue our eyes on the upgraded computer screen. The soccer match has begun, Liverpool against Sevilla.

"Woooo, Sevilla!" The guys cheer as one of the players kicks the ball.

"Wanna fight? Coutinho will kick your ass."

"Save your breath until they score once, Arm."

"Fucking shit."

"Who? You or your team?"

"I mean you."

"We'll see who's shit."

"Okay. Bring it on!"

I keep Liverpool's motto at heart. 'You'll never walk alone.'

Let's not lose together. We must win. Show the world what you got.

Ten minutes in my initial enthusiasm gradually turns into anxiety. My forehead is covered in sweat, my hands wet like they've been in a basin. Both teams are relentless, the game getting intense by the second. I can't help but fear that history will repeat itself.

And I'm right. I'm unsure if my strong hunch or misfortune has led them to defeat. How could they lose every match this season? Boohoo...

"There, there, Arm. You're tearing up," my friends tease me in a sympathetic tone, noticing me pouting at the score on the screen.

"I'm not crying."

"Okay. But you're drooping. Go mend your heart in your room. Better luck next time."

Those motherfuckers throw their arms around me, sending me onto the floor. Pipo and Sand then volunteer to carry me back to my bed with my broken heart.

I thought they would stay and offer me some solace, but no. They leave to celebrate victory.

Okay! I'll lie down here and cry!

I wake up in the morning at the same time as usual. After showering, I hear the conversation about the match last night. This is typical in the male dormitory. They're soccer fans with my favorite teams, so you can expect discussion after the big game. It would've been more enjoyable had Liverpool won.

I want to boast and make my friends jealous as well.

Since we're using Sand's car today, we agree to have breakfast together at the dormitory cafeteria first. Before we cross the road, a muffled scream draws our attention. I spot the tall guy standing ahead. My third-year peer mentor, the alien.

"My idol is hereeeeeeeee. I'm going to cry." Pipo marches toward Arc and greets him before I even catch up.

"What brings you here, P'Arc?"

"To see someone make good on his promise," Ugh, he's serious about silly things.

"I haven't bought the shirt. Don't worry that I'll break the promise."

"Hope in. I'll give you a ride." It's his character to switch the subject.

"I'm having breakfast with my friends."

"I asked Po. You can come with me."

"Jeez."

"Come on. Don't make me repeat myself."

"Okay~ Whatever." I quickly spin around to ask for my friends' permission. Pipo and Sand seem honored and push me to my third-year peer mentor. Finally, I get in the car and we head to the restaurant of the older guy's choice.

"How's school?" asks Arc once we're in the famous pork blood soup place and wolfing down the food.

"Good. The activity is exhausting, though."

"It'll pass." He adds pork blood to my bowl nonstop.

"Why did you give this to me? Eat it."

"I don't eat pork blood."

"Then why did you order?"

"I wanted pork blood soup without pork blood. What's your problem?"

It's my problem nowwww. You could've ordered clear soup, you son of a bitch. I'm not saying that, of course, scared to get counterattacked. I'll just change the topic.

"The engineer friendship festival is in a few weeks. What sports are you playing?"

"None," replies Arc with a deadpan face.

"What's your duty?"

"Nothing."

"How?"

"Why not?" I give up. You're the Superior Prince. No one messes with you.

"Did you check your buddy? Is it a boy or a girl?"

"None of your business." There goes my curiosity.

"What should I get for my buddy? Like...Something impressive and a good memory between us?"

"A shirt," suggests the guy before me. I take it seriously and ask him enthusiastically.

"A shirt? What kind? I'll take a look."

"Man United."

You piece of shit! I thought he would forget, but he has been waiting to knock me out. How unfortunate of me to have such a trashy peer mentor. He uses every chance to taunt me.

"They let other teams have the upper hand. Wait until they mean business."

"You can brag when they win." Arc ignores me and continues eating. Even though he's annoyed with me, he always pays for me, and that's a good thing.

We're back to his car. As soon as my butt touches the seat Arc tosses a piece of fabric onto my lap. It's not a rag. It's the Superior Prince's Manchester United shirt.

“My team lost last night, and now you’re rubbing it in my face. What kind of devil are you?” I ask the guy beside me. Arc shrugs cheekily and casually answers.

“Quit trying to avoid it.”

“I said I’d buy it.”

“I have it. Just put it on. Wash it and return it to me the day after tomorrow.”

“Wow, can’t you give me some time to ease the pain?”

“No.”

“Okay.” No more arguing. I’m tired...

The car accelerates on the familiar road with the fucking cruel charming driver. The vehicle is fancy, the AC is cool, and the music is beautiful. I won’t get to experience this often, so I better enjoy it while I can.

We pull over the footpath in front of the general building where my class is today. Arc shoos me away immediately.

“Go.”

“Thank you for the meal and the ride.”

“I have workshop at the department building. This is on the way.”

“How? It’s on the other side.”

“Are you going to keep messing with me?”

“I haven’t done anything. I’m just curious.”

I get out of the car and wave the Superior Prince goodbye, and he drives off without a glance back. Pursing my lips, I curse him in my mind and enter the building.

As this is the general building, there are students from various departments. We all have our regular seats. It’s an unspoken rule and human nature to flock with familiar people. The electrical engineering students are on the top row sloping lecture seats, while other students occupy other areas accordingly.

“Arm is here. How is my idol doing? Tell me everything.”

The electrical engineering guys always arrive first whenever I go somewhere with Arc. They want to hear about the coolness of the Superior Prince, their beloved and worshiped idol. All it takes is for Arc to pull over before the male dormitory to earn their screams.

I try my best to elaborate on all the good things about my third-year peer mentor to them, and they praise him without fail.

"Enough of my idol. Let's talk about you." All eyes are on me.

"What?"

"Where's the group paper? We'll submit at the front."

"Right. Give me a second." I unzip my backpack and my whole body goes rigid. I recall I didn't put the folder in here. There is only the soccer shirt, my wallet, and my shabby pencil case.

HOLY FUCK!

I left my folder in Arc's carrrrrr. Being lashed by my friends isn't as frightening as being berated by my third-year peer mentor. How could I forget it? Damn me.

"Hey, I left the paper in P'Arc's car."

"Arm!"

"I'll call him! Calm down."

"Hurry up before the professor comes."

"Don't scold me. I can't catch up with my guilt."

They continue grumbling. I take my phone out of my pocket with my hand shaking, hoping for the shortest lecture from the tall guy. Before I call him, the classroom door opens and someone steps inside, causing a stir.

"Is that P'Arc? From civil engineering?"

"Yes, yes. Waaaah, he's fucking hot."

"The Superior Prince!"

"I caaaaaaaan't!"

The students from my department aren't the only ones excited. Everyone from everywhere locks their eyes on the newcomer, who looks super cool in his workshop shirt. The other students whip out their phones simultaneously. It upsets me slightly that I'm not as handsome as him.

"Where's the electrical engineering group?"

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" Whoa, they scream because of that? Are those at the front still breathing?

"Hey, I'm here." I blurt out, not letting him check his popularity for too long.

Arc glances up but keeps his feet planted.

"Come here. You left your paper in my car."

"Ah..." Why is everyone staring at me?

My face gradually burning, I stand up and scurry down the steps to the Superior Prince. Classism feels strong here. I feel like a peasant next to him.

"Thank you. How did you know it's this room?"

"Your schedule is on the website."

"Sorry for bothering you."

"You bother me all the time."

"Ugh."

"I'm off. Study hard."

"Yeah."

"..."

"You... study hard, too!"

"Awwwwwwwwww."

BOOM!

Dozens of fireworks go off in my head. The other students are still hollering before the new topic takes over the crowd. And Arc is gone yet he's still the center of attention.

The killing shot of the day is how the Superior Prince with his legendary deadpan face can actually...

Smile.

“Oh, you’re switching sides?”

“Arm, what made you wear that shirt?”

“I’m afraid Man United will lose because Arm wears that shirt.”

“Oh, Arm...”

Everyone points out my shirt whenever I walk by. I’m simply having a meal at the dormitory cafeteria in the Manchester United shirt and now all engineering students are talking about me. Well, I’m well known for being a fan of Liverpool. It’s no surprise people are puzzled by me wearing my rival’s shirt.

But I didn’t expect these many questions!

I wouldn’t have challenged Arc had I known the result. As agreed, I must wear this shirt all day and post it on Instagram to be made fun of. This is hurtful. I won’t ever do that again. I’ll quietly root for my team without being too obvious.

I’ll flex once we achieve victory. Now, I’ll just humbly chow down my food.

I endure being teased all day. Arc probably has no clue, but it’s not the point. I’ve made good on the promise.

I quickly return to the dormitory in the evening and wipe my sweat on my bed after the ultimate attempt to avoid my dorm mates just to end up being stared at by my roommate.

“I’ve been meaning to ask you since this morning. Whose shirt is that?” Sand’s nosy expression is terrifying.

“P’Arc’s.” I admit.

“Give it to me after you’re done. I’ll wash it for my idol.”

Whoooooooooa, if you like him this much just give up on Waan.

“I’ll take care of it. If I gave it to you, Pipo and the guys would yank it to pieces.”

“Whatever.”

“Oh, Sand, can you take a photo of me?”

He turns up his fucking good looking face and asks me in puzzlement “Why?”

“I made a bet with P’Arc. If Liverpool lost, I had to wear the Manchester United shirt for a whole day and post it on instagram.”

“How bold of you. Give me your phone.”

My dear friend wriggles his fingers. I pass him my phone and adjust my position, though the shirt hurts my pride as a Liverpool fan.

“Will you smile a little?” Sand finds the right angle, holding my phone up.

“How can I smile? I’m not a fan of this team.”

“Just smile. You’ll look better.”

“I look good with any expression. Just take the photo. So annoying.”

CLICK!

The shutter clicks a few times before my best friend hands me back the phone. I check the photos and choose one to upload on instagram with no filter. I never use filter anyway, I don’t really care about that.

Arc. I did it, whether you see it or not

Armm01 Stop asking which team is my favorite. I stay loyal. I just had nothing to wear today :(

My post becomes a hot topic in an instant, mainly because of my dorm mates bombarding the comment section, teasing me like usual, which I take no offense. If they want to tease me, go ahead. A handsome guy like me forgives everyone. Haaaaaaa.

SeeOfsand Give some credit to the photographer. You would’ve looked like shit without me.

K.kkkop *I can't believe you switched sides after your favorite team lost yesterday. Poor you, my friend.*

PipoLovingDolls *The imposter among fans of Liverpool*

Kitti_James *Ugh... my goodness. I will never root for the same team as you*

TOR_EN *You're the man*

YeepoonJP *How cute >//<*

X_envi *freaking insane. I respect your lousy ass.*

Jet.Jassada *Isn't that Arc's shirt? Mmmmmmm...*

Even Jet won't spare me, throwing a bomb that provokes my friends to comment more in curiosity. I read without replying to any of the comments until...

The you know who shows up.

Arc_anol *even after three point seven million games, Liverpool never gets the taste of victory.*

Whoa!! My hands instantly twitch.

I don't know what's wrong with me. When the other guys tease me, I can endure and ignore it, but I can't stand it when Arc does it. He's a fucking pain in the ass. I reply to him without wasting a second

Armm01 *@Arc_anol what's with the taunting when I'm promoting your team?*

Arc_anol *@Armm01 promoting my team? People will root for other teams because of your expression*

Armm01 *@Arc_anol what do you want????*

Arc doesn't answer right away. But instead of a moment of calmness, his friends flood in the comment section. I don't know how to act after the quarrel with my third-year mentor.

Copp.C.E. *Ooooooh, Arm, just switch to this team. You're freaking cute.*

Bloom *Let's watch the game together at the bar next time*

CallmeiamPond *you can borrow my shirt as well*

Arc responds...

Arc_anol @Armm01 *don't wear their shirts. I feel bad for their teams.*

That fucking hurts. Waaah.

I'll tell Mr. Rungson to spank you and make you apologize.

I grumble to myself as the comments increase with no sign of stopping anytime soon.

They have fun bickering. Did they forget something...? This is my account, morons.

CoppC.E. @Arc_anol *I don't mind. He can wear mine.*

CallmeiamPond @Arc_anol *you lent Arm your shirt. Why can't I?*

Arc_anol @callmeiamPond *just this once. I also feel bad for my team*

I think of a comeback to retrieve my confidence, but someone is one step faster. And it makes me...

At a loss for words.

Bbloom @Arc_anol *you feel bad? You were smiling at his photo earlier*

It's the Engineer Friendship Festival!!

The engineering department is bustling with activities. Dozens of buses pull over one by one. We're the host this year, so we must take good care of students from other universities. We're forming rows to welcome them, singing, clapping away.

The girls from the other universities are soooooooo cute that I nearly beg for my life. I crane my neck to look at them to the point my bones hurt even after they walk far away.

The main job of the freshmen is to welcome and prepare performances. The second-year students and upper are in charge of registration, shirt and food distribution, sports schedules, and academic activities. The festival lasts five days. It's hectic.

After the welcoming of the students from the other universities, we all receive shirts customized for this festival only. The unique trait is the incongruous crimson color and creatively designed festival logo.

The students from the other universities get to rest the whole day after the long trip, but we have no time to rest. It's our important time to find our buddies and give them gifts.

Pipo already knows who his buddy is since he searched for his facebook account and texted him days ago. He splits up from us to show his buddy around, leaving Sand and me looking for ours. At four, my dear best friend finally stumbles across his buddy.

What about me...?

"Ah, excuse me. Do you know someone named Sky in the fourth year?" I ask a student from Chiang Mai, unsure what the name is.

"Isn't Sky in the third-year?" The girl asks her friend.

"Sky? Wait, what's your buddy's major?" she asks me.

"Electrical."

"Oh, Sky's major is industrial engineering. I think it's Tongfah." **A/N: Tongfah means sky in thai**

"Tongfah..." I mumble.

"I saw Tongfah before we left. Not sure where Tongfah is, though. Sorry."

"It's all right. Thank you."

I walk away and scan the huge crowd, shaking my head to wipe away the dizziness. No matter how hard I try, I can't find Tongfah. I don't even have her contact. I give up eventually because it's time for the open ceremony and dinner. Time is up.

Since the department activity area is small, we use the university hall instead because it's spacious and air-conditioned. All the dishes are arranged on the low tables for each group. Ten people for one table. The front stage is taken over by the MC speaking on the microphone.

"Is the food good?"

"Yessssssssss," everyone replies.

I sit with nine other electrical engineering students. Pipo is the most cheerful one of us, showing a photo on his phone to me.

“This girl on the left, I have her IG account!” I quickly turn to where he points.

Seeing a cute girl sitting among her friends, I can’t help smiling. She’s from a university in Khon Kaen. Her hair color, height, face, and lips are all perfect.

“She’s beautiful,” I say honestly.

“She’s the first-year princess. See, she has one hundred ninety thousand followers.

Wow!”

“Daaaaamn. I’ll follow her,” Yo cuts in. Everyone loses their interest in the food and takes out their phones to follow the girl on instagram.

Time passes until the dishes are emptied. It’s finally the highlight on the stage.

“As the tradition of the annual engineering friendship festival goes, it’s buddy time...e...e...e...”

“Yeaaaaah!!”

The sound resounds. Even my friends join in.

“What an exciting activity! You’ll give your gifts to your buddies. I believe many of you have found yours, so this is the time for you to hang out together!”

“Wooooooooooooo!” The world is in chaos. The students running and yelling. I slowly stand up in confusion among these buddies with a terribly lonely heart.

Where’s Anon’s Tongfah? You’d better show up now.

Twenty minutes later, the clamor subsides. There’s a problem, though, which the senior immediately notices.

“Who hasn’t found your buddies?” I raise my hand. Around twenty people haven’t found their buddies either.

“I’ll help you find them. Let’s start with...”

BAM!

The hall door is pushed open, drawing everyone’s attention to the newcomer. The crowd stirs at the sight of the person who never fails to miss the timing and always makes an entrance.

“So handsome~~~~”

“Is he an engineering prince? Or maybe campus prince?” The students from the other universities start guessing as I crane my neck to look at him.

“Let’s welcome the Superior Prince. He’s our half-pride.”

“Haha,” we laugh at the MC’s joke.

“Arc, have you found your buddy?” The MC resumes her duty. Arc strides along the way, his movements on everyone’s eyes.

“No.”

“Come here. We’ll help the Superior Prince find his buddy.”

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

How exciting...

I admit Mr. Anol is indeed hot, his aura radiating from the entrance to the inside, the center of attention. Now that he’s called to stand in front of the stage, the spotlight makes him stand out even more.

“May I know if you got the hint of who your buddy is?”

“Yes.”

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!” What’s wrong with these engineering students? They scream at each of his words. This is nuts.

“Which university do they go to?”

“MEU. First-year.”

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Someone from Khon Kaen, huh? Those students are tense in anticipation.

“Could you read out the hint for us?”

At that second, Arc reaches for his phone in his pocket and reads the hint on the screen with his unique low voice.

“Fair skinned. Big eyes. A lively cutie. Sometimes cheeky. Famous in the department.”

"Wow, your buddy must be super cute. Did you get the gear code?"

"Yes."

"Do you know who that is?"

"I suppose."

"Go ahead, then. Please walk to your buddy." This is more exciting than listening to the lottery announcement because we have no idea who Arc is marching to. My heart is pounding even though I'm watching from afar. It's as if everyone wishes to know who the Superior Prince will stop at and how pretty she is.

But the more he walks, the stranger things get.

"Arc, Arc, wrong university. Your buddy is from somewhere else," Copp shouts from the other side as the tall guy strides toward me. Closer...and closer...

What the hell? Go the other way! I wish to protest, yet no words come out. I'm baffled.

The Superior Prince's friends keep shouting at him, yet he fixes his gaze on me. He walks forward and stops in front of me.

"Arc, your buddy is over here!"

"MEU students are over here!"

It takes a while before he speaks.

"I found my buddy. His name is Arm."

"No. That's your peer mentee."

"No. I want this one."

"Arc!"

"I want this one."

BOOM!!

Something explodes in my head.

Chapter 9

Host of the Engineer Friendship (?) Festival

The world is tilting.

My brain stops functioning.

I sit still, staring at the expressionless tall guy in front of me amid the clamor, but I can't hear any noises. All I know is...

What the fuck is Arc even doing? Fuuuuuuuuck!

"Y... You came the wrong way. You're not supposed to take care of... a student from the same university." I tell my third-year peer mentor straightforwardly after taking some time to collect myself.

Arc remains quiet as all of us expectantly wait for his response. He should just say something instead of being silent like this.

"P'Arc." I call the Superior Prince again, and he finally replies.

"Why not? We can take care of anyone."

Noooooooooooooooooooo.

"You take care of your buddy."

"Which is you," he insists with a deadpan face.

"No. I'm not from MEU."

"But you're cute."

"I'm not from MEU."

"Well, you're cute."

"There are hundreds of cute people here."

"But I choose you." What a fucking pain in the ass. He's driving me up the wall.

“Arc, quit causing a scene. Come here. Your buddy is over here.” Copp and Bloom step up and snatch the Superior Prince away, not letting him argue with me any longer.

The laughter drowns the MC’s voice. “Hahahahaha!”

Everyone watches Arc getting dragged to the other side amid the constant conversations and laughter. It takes them ten minutes for them to quieten.

I scratch my head and play on my phone to hide from others’ teasing eyes. Soon the third-year MC explains the Superior Prince’s odd action as him not wanting to take care of anyone but his peer mentee.

I know Arc tends to close himself from others, which leads to people not getting to know his personality. I hope he gains more great friends from the festival.

We’re still matching buddies. I’m the only one left as a senior from Chiang Mai reveals my buddy has gone out and will probably return later. For fuck’s sake...

What kind of person is she to be so unruly?

“P’Arc’s buddy is the engineering princess from MEU. What’s her name again? Brink?” Sand asks, his eyes fixed on the girl they just followed on instagram.

Having one hundred and ninety thousand followers is insane. They look perfect together. Damn... I want this to happen to me as well.

“No surprise. The seniors chose her for him. My idol got her,” Pipo agonizes like his heart is breaking. I know he’s not jealous of Arc but of the engineering princess. This dumbass...

“Oh, they chose our buddies. I thought it was random,” I ask in puzzlement.

“As if! They chose for everyone, including you.”

“Me?”

“Yeah, they chose Tongfah for you.”

“Got it.”

“The world is unfair. Why do they pair good looking people together? Beauty privilege should be gone in this day and age.”

I listen to the guys grumbling.

I keep playing on my phone and turn my attention to the stage a few moments later as they ask for volunteers to join the activity. The festival is lively. Around half an hour later, someone shows up and hovers over me.

The guy has fair skin, so fair that I can't believe he's Thai. He's also fucking handsome, with a sharp nose, curved lips, and an undercut hairstyle that makes him charming and striking at the same time. Wow... I'm so jealous of good looking people. Again.

“Are you Arm Anon?” he asks evenly.

How does he know my name? We never met. I keep my question inside and reply “Yeah.”

“Okay. I'm Tongfah.”

“Huh?”

“We're buddies.”

My buddy is a dude!

Tongfah is a boyyyyyyyyyy. How bright is the sky...

“Tongfah isn't a girl?” Instead of answering, he sits next to me and holds out a bag of juice in a deadpan face with no explanation. It takes me some time to realize this is his gift for me, and I quickly grab mine for him.

“This is for my buddy.”

“You can call me Fah,” says Tongfah, accepting my gift.

Having no other idea, I bought snacks for my buddy like my friends did but I also got him a shirt with the engineering logo from the student association as a keepsake. Ten years later, the shirt will remind him of this memory.

All our actions are the center of attention. It's not an ideal situation to have an attractive buddy. Aside from the inferiority regarding the comparison of our looks, the stares are uncomfortable. Fortunately, I'm the best at this, knowing how to ease my nerves.

The first thing I do is strike up a conversation.

"P'Fah, where were you when we were matching buddies?" The guy averts his gaze from the stage to me.

Fuck! What a face!

Is he an engineering prince? His charisma is out of this world.

"I was doing something. Looking for someone."

"Looking for someone?"

"Yeah."

"Have you eaten?"

"I have." Shit... I have myself for being unable to look away. I wish I was this handsome. Well, I wish I had everyone else's looks except mine. Ugh!

How is my buddy, Tongfah, different from Arc? Everything, I would say. Their personalities are dissimilar. Tongfah is quiet and looks clean. Meanwhile...

My third-year peer mentor is the fiercest creature.

The activity on the stage continues joyously, followed by the introduction of the first-year engineering princes and princesses who will participate in the contest tomorrow, drawing constant screams. I look at Theme from our department. He's more charming than usual after getting dolled up by the seniors.

I believe the students from the other universities have no idea the engineering prince they're screaming for is dating someone much cooler than him. My mind goes to the political science plus campus prince.

That year, Warm won the contest due to his looks, while Arc gave zero fucks. Yeepoon told me he earned the nickname 'the Superior Prince' that same day.

“Ooooooooooh, P’Arc!”

The crowd stirs again a few moments later. I glance around just to find the Superior Prince standing over me with a death glare.

“Arm, move,” he says. I obey, too confused to argue.

Arc squeezes between me and my buddy. My friends are overjoyed that their idol is sitting with us. I’m probably the only one bewildered. What the hell is wrong with him?

“Why did you come here?”

“I got bored.” What kind of answer is that?

“What about your buddy? Did you take good care of her?”

“She’s just my buddy, not my lover.”

I fight the urge to kick his ass.

“Who gave you the right to sit between me and P’Fah?”

“It’s my right as your peer mentor.”

“Wow, it’s not that big of a deal.”

“What do I have to be to earn that right?”

“...” I go quiet. We are in a dead silence because I have no words. I didn’t expect the oldest guy here to speak.

“You’re Arc? I heard you’re famous.”

Arc turns his head abruptly and glances at Tongfah so hard I wish to drag him out the hall in fear of a possible fight.

“Not as much as you. Aren’t you the campus prince?”

Damn...the campus prince.

“How did you know?”

“It’s not that hard to figure out.”

“You knew?”

“I knew from Arm’s hint.”

“Who are you to Arm?”

“His peer mentor.” I lose interest in the rest of the conversation, fixated on when Arc said he knew who my buddy was from the hint. Does it mean he secretly found him out? How wicked. He didn’t even put that much effort for his buddy.

I let them bicker for a while until a question pops up in my mind, and I voice it out.

“P’Fah, are you playing any sports tomorrow?” I’ll bring you some snacks.”

“Me?” He stares at me. “I’m playing soccer tomorrow.”

“Same,” the Superior Prince snarls seconds later.

Wait! What the hell?

“You said you weren’t playing.” I flick my eyes to my third-year peer mentor and receive a cheeky answer.

“Really? Did I say that?”

“Yes, you did.”

“I’m playing now. My friend put me on the team.”

“Do well, then. Don’t embarrass us,” I tease, but Arc’s gaze is disturbingly serious.

“Come cheer for me.”

“Of course, I’ll be there to bring snacks for P’Fah.”

“Bring some for me, too.”

“Wait, wait, we’re not buddies.” Arc gives no reply, in complete silence, but he indirectly threatens me with his glare. Do I care? I turn away to chat with my friends.

The activity on the stage resumes. Half an hour later, Yeepoon appears with a DSLR camera in excitement. I understand the purpose of her appearance at our table.

“Arm, your buddy is super handsome,” says the engineering princess, smiling. I’m itching to call Jet to rat her out for dramatically complimenting someone else.

“This is P’Tongfah.”

"I want to take his photos for the cute boy page." Not waiting for her to elaborate, I turn to my buddy from the other university.

"P'Tongfah, can she take your photos for the engineer cute boy page?"

"Sure."

With that permission, my second-year peer mentor dashes toward him and sets up her camera in determination. Since Arc blocks me from my buddy, I crane my head to look at Tongfah.

Messing with me, the Superior Prince moves as I move, obstructing the view. I can't see anything but my third-year peer mentor's handsome face.

"Don't block me," I protest, reaching my limit.

"Block what?"

"I want to see P'Yeepoon taking photos of my buddy."

"Why?"

"Because I want to."

Arc heaves a sigh before cupping my cheeks in his large hands, locking my eyes on his.

"Look at me."

"What do I get from that?" I can't even meet his eyes. I don't know why. We see each other regularly, and he's my peer mentor, yet his expressions, actions, and odd behaviors make my heart flutter. And now I'm the victim of his impolite charm.

"Tell me what you want."

"I want nothing. Let go of me. They're staring."

"Say yes, and I'll let you go."

"Say yes to what?"

"Just say it."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Say yes now."

“All right, all right. Yes. Will you let go of me now?” Arc releases me just like that and cracks his rare smile to shake people’s hearts. “What did I say yes to?”

“You’ll cheer for me.”

“That’s not a big deal at all.”

“Only me.”

“How? Even if he is in a different university, I have to cheer for my buddy.”

“Many will cheer for him.”

“The same goes for you.”

“It’s not the same.” His voice softens. We lock eyes again. “They’re not you.”

“...”

“Can’t it be you that cheers for me?”

BOOOOOM!! Another explosion in my head.

Arc has changed. He’s become this clingy kid. How am I right now? One word... dead.

“Go, CNU!”

“Go, SSU!”

“We’ll see.”

“It’s embarrassing to lose. The host will not be defeated.”

“Chiang Mai came for the kill.”

Both cheering teams are enthusiastic because the first soccer match will begin early. The university from Chiang Mai versus our university. We’re not that serious since it’s a friendship game, but the cheering teams have a different opinion.

“They’re in the field now. The first team is in crimson shirts, CNU, the host. The striking one isn’t the captain but the Superior Prince of Bang-on Pochana...a...a...a...”

“Kyaaaaaaaa! Go, P’Arc!”

“I’m rooting for you, handsome!”

“Rungson!!”

Ugh, these bastards. They're shouting his father's name again. I turn to Arc's gang and can't bring myself to scold them as they seem really close. The tall guy wears an engineering soccer shirt with the name of the sponsor printed on it like usual.

Damn, I would've cussed him out had he not pulled it off. Didn't it bug him when the commentator announced that name?

"The other team counterattacks. SSU will fight with their premium item. Tongfah from electrical engineering...g...g...g..."

What's with the echo?!

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaa! P'Tongfah!"

The cheering teams enjoy this more than usual due to these eye candies to scream for. I sit in front of the stand, preparing water and energy drinks for the break, currently watching the commentator introduce each player.

As the cheering competition isn't today, you can sit anywhere. All seats are now occupied by students from various universities, none left.

"Look at my idol. He's so fucking cool. I want to crawl over to him to send him encouragement."

"Chill, Sand." The dorm mates are seated in the same row, dramatically praising Arc together, wiping away the silence with their chatter.

Phweeeeeeeee!

The whistle marks the start of the game. The players from both teams try to get the ball in the center of the field. The area is filled with encouraging chants and claps.

Despite my position, I can see a certain someone clearly. Arc shows no sign of exhaustion, his eyes determined and serious as always.

"Bang-on Pochana passes the ball to Aob. Aob passes the ball to the opponent because he's confused by his own name. SSU gets the ball, to their surprise."

"..."

“The handsome Oppa successfully snatches the ball. Dribble... Dribble... Oppa kicks the ball to Miss Sumruay’s Fried Dumpling.”

“...”

“Miss Sumruay’s Fried Dumpling sends the ball to the left. Mr. Yong, the Sock Sellers, gets the ball right in time and... and... hits it over the goal! Ugghgggh, who told you to come up with these weird names? I can’t keep up!”

I’m sick of those names and the commentator himself. He raps like this is a provincial paddling competition. It tires me and makes me lose my breath for him. Sand and Pipo tense up in anticipation, digging their nails into my thighs. I kick them off.

It’s worse when the Chiang Mai team scores and continues to widen the gap.

In the first half, we’re two points behind. My dorm mates hug each other in tears when Arc falls down in the center of the field. Ugh, you piece of shit. They’re weeping like crazy. How annoying!

The players take a break in their zones, and the support teams spring into action. I stand up and head to the zone of the players from Chiang Mai first. Spotting Tongfah laughing with his friends, I slowly walk politely.

“Oh, nong Arm.” he greets me in a good mood.

“Hey, you did well.”

“Yeah. It’s just for fun. What brings you here?”

“I bought something for you.” Simple things like water, energy drinks and refreshing towels.

“Thanks a lot.”

“You’re welcome.”

“You can stay here. It’s not hot like on the stand.”

“Ah...” I hesitate, glancing at the other side, where the players from my university are. Arc is there, looking for me. “It’s okay. I’ll go over there.”

“All right. See you this evening.”

“See you.”

Once out of the opponent’s zone, I advance to the other side. I feel like a rich man pampering my wife and mistress. What can I do? Tongfah is my buddy, and Arc is my peer mentor. Sigh...

“P’Arc.” I call. The tall guy flicks his gaze at me and turns away. Given the situation, I’m terrified to get my ass beaten for pissing off the Superior Prince.

“Why are you here?” asks the tall guy in a plain voice when I stop in front of him.

“I bought water for you.”

“I don’t need it,” says Arc, though he doesn’t touch anything from the support team. He’s such a demanding kid.

“Don’t be like this. Here’s your refreshing towel. This brand is good.” I unwrap the refreshing towel and hand it to him. Arc accepts it but refuses to say a word. So I continue speaking.

“I saw you fall. Does it hurt?”

“...” Silence.

The number you’re calling is unavailable.

“Here’s your water. Have some.” I even twist the lid off for him. I’ve never even done this for my family.

Arc takes the bottle of water and finishes half of it, chugging it down despite his stubbornness. Why is he playing hard to get when he’s this thirsty?

“We’re two points behind,” says Arc out of the blue.

“I know. I saw it. No worries. A lot of people are cheering for you. Lots of girls, too.”

“So what?”

“Oh, to cheer you up. I’m jealous of you for getting that buddy. I saw her bringing you snacks before the game?”

“So what?” He repeats.

“Take care of her.”

“I don’t want to take care of others. I want to do that to someone.”

“This is what people in love say, huh? Is that person here?”

“I guess.” What’s this pang in my heart? I don’t even know who that unlucky person is.

“Do your best. That person must like you.”

“Maybe not. Give me a blessing.”

“Get hurt.”

“You brat... I’ll do it.”

“What?”

“I’ll do my best for you. Bye.”

“W...Wait...”

Have you ever felt this way? It’s not a bizarre feeling, but you’re so fucking stunned and your heart is pounding like never before.

Because of him...only him.

I can’t stomach his words. To be frank, I’m too stupid to understand, and it’s not something you can ask someone for their input. I keep the question in my mind and return to my gang. The game continues until ninety minutes are up.

It’s my curse. The team I root for always loses...

Our team lost to the Chiang Mai team by 1-2. The players, however, are in good spirits since it’s just for fun. Only the cheering team groans in woe. The worst of it all is the group of boys, my friends, crying together.

The electrical engineering guys will always be loyal to the Superior Prince.

“Arc must be weeping in his mind. I want to run over and offer him some comfort,” Yo starts, and the other guys nod. When the players come back to the sideline, they all sprint over to cheer Arc up.

I let them comfort the Superior Prince for a while before leaving. I'm about to go with them when a low voice halts me, so I stay to face my third-year peer mentor.

"We lost. I'm sad." His sadness is fucking fake. Unbelievable.

"You sucked."

"I went easy on them."

"Whoa, you went way too easy on them. Weren't you worried about your pride?"

"I didn't do it for our university."

"Ooooh, who did you play for?" I tease, satisfied to see his deadpan face.

"..."

"I'm shy on their behalf."

"Are you?"

"I'm blushing. Awwwww, who did you play for? Tell me."

"I played for you."

"...!!"

"Awwwww, you're blushing for real. Look in the mirror."

Arc pushes my head, sending me staggering. Arc walks off far away, but my face still burns. I want to check my face on my phone camera but don't dare to. Perhaps, I'm afraid he's correct.

Perhaps I'm afraid... I might feel something toward my peer mentor.

The Engineer Friendship Festival is lively from morning to evening.

Many sports took place in the morning. As for the evening, there's the popularity contest. Everyone is focusing on this activity, each university bringing their props and clothes and preparing their performances. I come to the venue before the event starts, highly anticipating this.

Who would've thought a sophomore would ask for my help a few moments later?

"Are you free, nong Arm?"

“Yeah.”

“Do me a favor. Can you distribute food to the princes and princesses? We’re busy.”

“Sure. No problem.”

I rise and go to the support area to get the food boxes.

The engineering princes and princesses are in a one-way glass room. I leave my shoes in front of the room with a huge bag of food in one hand and struggle to push the door open with the other hand.

No matter how hard I try, the door won’t budge. Eventually someone comes to the rescue. “P’Arc?”

“It’s a sliding door, stupid.”

Arc knocks my head with his fist and grabs the bag of food away. Damn... how embarrassing. I was being an idiot for a long time, making the staff and the engineering prince and princesses laugh.

“It doesn’t say ‘push’, ‘slide’, or ‘pull.’ I didn’t know.”

“You never know anything, being stupid everyday.”

“What are you doing here, anyway?”

“To give my buddy snacks.”

“Aw, what if your crush gets upset? Your buddy is pretty,” I say, glancing at the target. The sight of Brink, the Engineering Princess, inflates my heart. How can she be so cute and charismatic?

“You talk too much. So annoying. Go away.”

“Telling me off again. What will you do if I don’t go?”

“I’ll kick your ass.”

“How aggressive. Bye, then. Thank you for not minding me.” I direct the last sentence to the students inside the room, and they respond with smiles. Before I go far, a few second-year staff members carry boxes of water bottles past me. I volunteer to help them unavoidably.

The sophomores take the lead with me trailing behind. Who would've thought that the situation in the room would change at that second? I overhear their conversation, assuming they don't notice me behind the staff members.

"Arm would've won if he hadn't fallen off the stage."

"It's good that he's not the engineering prince."

"..."

"He should be the Superior Prince's, right, Arc?" Pond, one of Arc's friends, says that.

"Yeah..."

I have no idea why Arc wouldn't deny it.

"Arm...Arm."

"Yes, yes." Yeepoon's voice snaps me back to reality.

"Why were you zoning out? Is the food bad?"

"No. I zoned out because I worked too hard today." A lie. My mind was occupied by the conversation in the prince and princess room. I can't shake it out of my mind no matter how hard I try.

Today follows the same pattern. We have dinner before the students perform on the stage. The difference is the seniors allow us to take care of our buddies fully by sharing snacks and heaving the meal together. Sand and Pipo have gone to join their buddies, and Yeepoon came to sit with me for some reason.

Tongfah bought me juice again, and I gave him a dessert from a famous place near the university in exchange.

"Oh, P'Arc is back. What did you buy your buddy?" Yeepoon greets the tall guy after he's delivered his snacks to the engineering princess who will perform tonight.

"Snacks," he replies, squeezing between me and Tongfah again.

"Go sit over there. There's no room for you," I groan, unable to make eye contact, my heart pounding.

"No. This is for you," Arc switches the topic, placing a large bottle of Milk in front of me.

"Why?"

"It'll help you grow taller. Better than juice," says Arc, eyeing the juice Tongfah bought me in my hand. I sense a foreseeable fight, but I don't understand why Arc feels the need to be better than him.

"I have nothing for you." I haven't even paid off the drinks last time, and the lender doesn't even want it. What a rich guy.

"Do I ever expect anything from you?"

"Yes."

"Like what?"

"You made me take care of you at the soccer field every day."

"Ha!" I fucking hate his scoff.

"Hey, let me get this out. I heard your conversation with the guys in the room. Explain yourself." Everyone seeing me carrying a box of bottles of water was like a scene from a comedy show. They went quiet before blatantly changing the subject.

"Explain what?"

"P'Pond said I should be the Superior Prince's."

"Do I need to explain?"

"Yes. You do."

"Okay, okay. I just want to keep you hidden so no one can hit on you."

"Why?"

"Well, many got interested in you after Yeepoon set your photo as the page profile picture. Be picky. Don't just choose anyone."

"Reeeeeeally?"

"..."

“Ooooh, I’d better check who liked my photo.” My stress dissipates. I whip out my phone and scroll through the Engineer Cute Boy page in excitement and discover tons of students from the other universities liked my photo.

It was ten thousand the other day. After the Engineer Friendship Festival began, it almost reached thirty thousand in a short time. Well, Theme can’t even beat me on this. Looks aren’t as important as connections.

I want to bow to Yeepoon so bad. I’ll check the inbox once I return to the dormitory.

“Seeing you all excited about the page, it reminds me of the photo of P’Tongfah I just posted,” the Engineering Princess plus the page admin changes the subject a while after I’ve been concentrating on the phone screen. My buddy is the topic.

“Why?” asks Mr. Anol, not Tongfah.

“Well, P’Arc, P’Tongfah’s photo is soooooooooo popular.”

“Good. The page will gain more attention and you can remove Arm’s photo from the profile.” What a douche to snatch my spotlight before I can even shine.

“The profile picture will be changed to the second-year winner after a month. You wouldn’t allow me to take your photo, P’Arc. Can you let me do it once?”

“I’ll let you do it when the page is about to be closed down.”

“Ugh, why did you say something so ominous?”

“It’s the time you’ve been waiting for. Do you know what time it is?” The MC draws everyone’s attention.

“Yes!!!”

“What is it?”

“The prince and princess time~~”

“Since you know, let’s watch the performance from the first university!”

“Wooooooo! Wooooooo!”

The spotlight is turned off, signaling the exciting show. The university from the east performs first. It's a Disney show in a new version.

"Beautiful!" I shout at the sight of the engineering princess stepping out in a blue gown.

"Keep it down," Arc warns. I purse my lips, my enthusiasm unaffected by his words. Even Cherprang *(BNK48 idol) doesn't mind that I'm flirty.

"Where am I? How did I get here?"

"Oh, jeez, my princess."

"It's a joke." The students from the other tables express their opinions while enjoying the show. All eyes are on the stage without blinking.

The performance from the other university is joyful and hilarious, and the selected songs are wonderful. I'm so engrossed that I pay no attention to my surroundings. Before I know it, Arc and I are the only people left at the table.

"Oh, where's P'Yeepoon?"

"P'Jet called her over to sit together."

"What about my buddy?"

"I don't know. He left and didn't come back."

"Just like that?"

"Follow him if you're so lonely."

"How can I do that?" If I wander outside, the seniors will chastise me. The scarier thing is they might assign tough work to me. I'd rather watch all these fun shows.

While waiting for the staff members to prepare the stage for the next performance, I initiate a conversation to fill the silence.

"I've been meaning to ask if you ate anything before coming here."

"No," replies Arc, shaking his head.

"How can you endure it? There's some food here. I'll eat with you."

"Just admit you're hungry."

"It's not like that." I pick up an empty plate and scoop rice onto it for the tall guy. Three dishes have been served today: green curry, clear soup and omelets.

The two latter dishes are gone. Only green curry will ease Arc's hunger. Feeling bad for eating most of the meal, I add green curry to his plate.

"Here you go. I guarantee it's good." I set the place on the table. The handsome guy flicks his eyes at the food and me back and forth.

"Why are there only eggplants?"

"I ate all the pork."

"Seriously?"

"You're lucky there's soup left. Quit complaining." He stops complaining and eats quietly as the staff member sets the props for the next performance.

"Hey, the cheering competition is tomorrow," I say, uncomfortable with the silence.

"So what?" I expected him to sound more excited. My expectations are too high, apparently.

"I cheered for you at the game. Won't you come see me tomorrow?"

"No."

"How heartless of you. Your action indicates how tight we are as the same gear code."

"Say that again."

"Why won't you cheer for me after I cheered for you? I'm hurt. I practiced my claps."

"You want me to watch you clap. Isn't that tormenting?"

"There's a surprise. The cheerleaders in front of the stand will change into the sexy cat costume. It blew my mind when I first saw it."

"It's not a surprise anymore."

"You haven't seen it in person."

"I hate a blabbering kid." I hate you, too. I stop persuading him to cheer for me as it's a waste of my breath. I'll just enjoy the second show from one of the other universities. They're performing a cheesy drama.

"Woooooooooooo!" The scream resounds as the Engineering Prince and Princess appear on the stage. Arc's buddy steps into the scene with a bamboo basket in a bright pink skirt, incredibly adorable and soft.

"Do you think P'Brink is cute?" I ask meekly, not even facing him.

"You know her name?"

"Yeah. Pipo and Sand showed me her IG account. Is your crush cute like this?"

"Yeah."

"Like this?"

"Cuter than this."

"Whoa!! For real?" Upon his answer, I can't help turning to Arc, who's already looking at me. "Can't you tell me who it is?! I can keep a secret."

"What a nosy brat."

"Wait. Are they here with us or from another department?"

"What will I get from telling you?"

"More eggplants," I say, spooning more eggplants for Arc, wiggling my eyebrows. "It's good."

"I want to bite you."

"Are you a dog? Are you going to bite me just because of that question?"

"Watch the show and leave me alone."

Arc continues eating, glancing at the stage at times. I can't pry anymore, obstructed by his indifference. No matter how much I wish to know the answer, I can only imagine it. Arc is so stubborn. I suppose he'll reveal it when he feels like it.

But I can't help it. My nosiness is off the charts.

"I can't picture you dating someone. Will you treat them well? Like, adding food to their place, waking them up in the morning, buying them healthy food, helping them with homework, something like that."

"Is this what dating is for you?"

"Oh, what is it for you, then?"

"It's what a nosy brat like you has never known."

"Yeah, whatever."

"Seriously, do you want to know that much?"

"A little."

The Superior Prince's weary face robs me of my will to live. I ignore him and divert my attention to the show.

The second performance ends, and the third university gets into the preparation. It's the host's turn, led by Theme and Angun, who shoulder our reputation and image.

"Wooooohoooo!! Kyaaaaaaaaa!!"

"Let's go!!"

The cheering goes on. The spotlight dims and shines again with Theme's appearance making us laugh. He's in a Captain America costume with a pot lid as a shield. Damn, I have to give it to him.

"Haha, I can't. Ugghgggh," I burst out laughing. When Theme jumps off the chair and introduces himself as Steve Rosso, I almost faint from laughing.

How lucky am I to not be the Engineering Prince. I would've been in his position right now.

"Look at our Avengers. I would've cried and saved myself before saving the world. Haha," I say, smacking Arc's arm.

I don't know if I'm annoying him because he speaks in a curt voice. "Arm."

"What?" I reply, not facing him.

“Is it that funny?”

“Yeah. Look at Theme. Who did his makeup?”

“Arm.”

“What now?”

“Why are you laughing that hard? Your eyes are almost closed.”

“Well, look at him. Haha.” My shoulders tremble from laughing.”

“Arm.”

“Whaaaaaat?”

“People are staring.”

“I don’t care. They’re staring at Theme more.”

“Arm.”

“What? What? What?” I turn to him, irritated by his constant questions. “Ask away. I’ll answer everything.”

“Haven’t had any idea?”

“ .. ”

“Why do you have to be this cute?”

“ .. ”

“That’s my question. Answer me.”

Amid the scream and laughter, at that moment, I hear nothing but Arc’s voice.

Chapter 10

Engineer Fierce Boy

“Guy, put the tables and cushions over here.”

“Hey! What about the leftovers?”

“In wet waste bins.”

"What about the plates?"

"In the basket for the setting team. Guys, save some questions. Just put things away so you can leave early."

"Can we leave now?"

"Yes. But pay for your friends' labor tomorrow."

"Jeez~ What the hell?"

My dorm mates keep grumbling. They're fucking cheeky. Despite being freshmen, they always mess with the seniors.

It's been an hour since the festival today ended. The students from the other universities have left to rest, but we, the host, stay to clean up. The freshmen must carry out the task with the seniors, who already have specific duties. We put away the tables, wash the dishes, and sweep the floor despite ourselves. I can't escape from this as well...

"We're celebrating tonight after this," says my roommate a while after silence.

"I'm fucking drained. Where are you going?"

"I'm taking my buddy to Bang-on Pochana. Pipo and his buddy are going, too. Why don't you invite Tongfah?"

"Ugh!" The thought gives me chills.

Not because of the rule that we can't bring our buddies to the bar but because Arc would kill me. I don't want to set up a fake bed in the car to trick him and embarrass myself like last time.

"You're laughing. Is it a yes or a no?"

"Do you seriously have no idea or intentionally want to mess with me?! I can't go this time. You also can't."

"I can't stand them up."

"Dumbass."

"So? Are you not going because you're scared of P'Arc?"

“Yeah...”

The mention of his name never fails to shake my heart. I’ve never been this way, but I’ve felt like this often lately.

I still remember his serious words at the same time. We sat together at the small table with the popularity contest proceeding on the stage, yet my eyes and ears focused on one person.

‘Arm?’

‘What? What? What? Ask away. I’ll answer everything.’

‘Haven’t had any idea? Why do you have to be this cute?’

‘...’

‘That’s my question. Answer me.’

‘W...What are you talking about? Why am I cute? One word to describe Mr. Anon is handsome.’

‘Handsome?’

‘Yeah. And don’t just say that to any girl if you don’t mean it. You’ll give them hope.’

‘Hope about what?’

‘It feels like you’re flirting. I would’ve fallen for you if it hadn’t been a joke.’

‘You’re not falling for me right now?’

‘Did you get no sleep? Why would I fall for you? Ugh!’

‘Yeah. I guess I didn’t sleep well. I’m also sick of talking to you.’

At the end of our conversation, his friends called him over to sit together, which he complied to with a weary face.

I have no clue why he asked that question, but the problem is why my heart fluttered. I was at loss for words, my face was flushing as if I got hit on by a hot guy, but that wasn’t the case.

“Arm.”

“ .. ”

“Arm, you son of a bitch!”

“H...Huh? What? What did you say? I didn’t feel anything”

“What the fuck? I haven’t asked about your feelings.” Sand shakes his head, diligently pouring the leftovers into the trash bag.

“Oh, it’s nothing. What did you say, by the way?”

“I told you to stay at the dorm if you’re not going. Don’t sleep because no one will open the door for me.”

“I know. Who else is going?”

“Everyone except you.”

“I’m really sorry. I have no choice.”

“Just make P’Arc allow you to go to the bar whenever you want. Now hurry up. I can’t wait to have some fun.” Sand looks slightly more delighted. By the time we’ve finished, it’s eleven.

The guys dart into the bathrooms, get changed, and douse themselves in perfume. Ten minutes later, they quietly sneak out of the dormitory, leaving me behind.

Ah... I’m fucking lonely.

I’ll just snoop on other people online, assuming my friends will post photos of themselves at the bar in an hour to mess with the seniors.

I go to instagram and scroll down the timeline. I like some photos, mostly of my friends from the same department. Heaps of photos have been uploaded because the engineer friendship festival was so entertaining that they couldn’t help but brag about it. My eyes land on someone.

Arc posted a photo after forever. It’s not even about soccer this time.

It's a photo of himself. Woaaaaow, unbelievable. The Superior Prince can't do anything simple, of course. He displays his peculiarity by showing only half his face, only both his eyes visible.

Good grief, his 220 followers have flooded the comment section. I'm about to compliment my third-year peer mentor as well, but...

BrinkBrink

Who?

The first question pops up in my head. I check her profile and go, 'Oh', in my mind because she's the engineering princess with the one hundred and ninety thousand followers fated to be Arc's buddy. It's no surprise to find her comment here.

BrinkBrink: Handsome.

But...her message feels deeper than it looks.

This is not normal. Getting nosy, I follow the situation closely, starting with liking Arc's photo and Brink's comment, then I check his tagged photos. And, as expected!

The engineering princess tagged Arc in a photo.

I noticed it multiple times. Since they met, Arc has been taking good care of her. He bought her snacks, checked on her in the prince and princess room, and provided her with whatever she needed. Considering his clear actions, I come to a conclusion. Here's another hot topic to inform the guys.

I spring up and turn my head back and forth before remembering Pipo and Sand are at the bar. Shit, I'm itching to gossip. I feel alone again since no one is here to listen to me.

Bummer. I should've snuck out with them.

Rrr...!

The ringtone startles me. I drop my gaze on the bright screen in excitement. My heart races even more as the caller is the fierce Arc, not one of my friends.

“Heeeeeeeey.” I pick up without wasting a second, dying to tease him, expecting to gain something from my nosiness.

[My friends saw your friends at the bar.] Wow, he sure has eyes everywhere.

“I didn’t go. I’m at the dorm right now. Don’t scold me.”

[Why didn’t you go?]

“You disallowed me?”

[I didn’t.]

“Oh.” You son of a bitch! Why didn’t he tell me? I was afraid to get my ass beaten. Arc is contradicting himself. “Isn’t it too late? I’m all alone at the dorm.”

[Why are you complaining? It’s your decision.]

“I’m lonely...”

[I’ll talk to you, then.]

“Handsome.”

[What?]

“Didn’t someone say that to you? Aw...” How brilliant am I to direct the topic about the bar to his personal matter.

[Nosy brat.]

“I’m flattered. You better manage your time well, I’m warning you, for your crush and the Engineering Princess. That’s tough.”

Arc has a crush on someone, but that doesn’t mean he won’t feel something for someone else, especially when that person is remarkably pretty and hot.

[The problem isn’t me. It’s you.]

“How?”

[Forget it.]

“Handsome,” I say, cracking a laugh.

[Say that again and I’ll kick your ass.]

“Come on, it’s cute. It’s nice to be complimented by a girl. I would’ve fallen in love.”

[Ugh!]

Again. I don’t know how to respond to his scoff that seems to mark the end of this part.

He soon hangs up, leaving as bizarrely as when he called.

The liveliness returns to boredom. I check social media and watch my friends’ reels with jealousy before my world turns upside down because someone has started something.

Arc, you bastard.

He commented on my latest photo on Instagram, leading other people, including my followers, to like it simply with one word.

Arc_anol: *handsome.*

Is he messing with me?!!

Running out of patience, I quickly reply.

Armm01: *@Arc_anol what’s your problem?*

Arc_anol: *@Armm01 are you shy now?*

Armm01: *@Arc_anol why should I be?*

Arc_anol: *@Armm01 you said you would’ve fallen in love if someone said you’re handsome.*

What the hell is wrong with him? Is he checking his popularity?

All right!! His comment has almost reached two hundred likes now. Damn.

Armm01: *@Arc_anol that’s not what I meant*

Arc_anol: *handsome*

Arc_anol: *handsome*

Arc_anol: *handsome*

Armm01: *@Arc_anol go the hell awayyyyyy*

Arc_anol: *handsome*

Armm01: *@Arc_anol you’re so damn annoying*

Arc_anol: *handsome*

Armm01: *@Arc_anol I give up*

Arc keeps going so we argue until there are around two hundred comments with no substance but our heating bickering.

Sand wobbles inside the room past one in the morning. He fixes his half closed eyes on me before plopping onto the bed and falling asleep. I'm also sleepy

Armm01: *@Arc_anol my friend is back*

Arc_anol: *@Armm01 yeah. are you lonely now?*

Armm01: *@Arc_anol I stopped feeling lonely since the first handsome*

Arc_anol: *@Armm01 good*

The conversation ends abruptly, yet the warmth lingers in my heart.

I can't pinpoint his purpose, but it somewhat feels nice. Sometimes... Arc's presence during my alone time wipes my loneliness away...

"Guys, get seated on the stand."

"Shit. If I transform the letters the wrong way again, the sophomores will rip me apart," Pipo gets extremely nervous while Sand stares at his phone in love, hitting on his crush even at an important time.

"Whatever will be, will be. Hurry up and get it over with," I say, stepping onto the stand. Today is as lively as before, occasionally filled with chants from other universities. We're the fifth team to perform, so we have to enjoy the other shows first.

Ten minutes later, the first performance begins. Their stand transforms into pictures and letters with the cheerleaders and performers fully dolled up at the front. Our seniors are on the edge of their seats. It'll be humiliating if we get the last place.

"Your buddy fucking stands out," Sand whispers to me, getting lonely after his phone is confiscated.

We look at the stand opposite to us. Tongfah is on the ground at the front watching the freshmen sitting still to get ready for the performance.

“Yeah. He’s the campus prince, bound to stand out. What? You want to be handsome like him?” I ask.

“No. I want to be handsome and cool like P’Arc only.”

Again. Another praise.

“He’s not all that.”

“Say that again and I’ll bring your dorm mates to jump you.” How scary. Arc is not to be shaded. I can’t help but wonder if he really considers me as a friend. Someone else is always seemingly more important.

“Okay, I’ll never say it again.”

“Let me ask you something. If two guys hit on you, who would you choose between P’Fah and P’Arc?”

“No one.”

“Oh, are you fucking playing hard to get?”

“Well, it’s not going to happen. Why would I choose?”

“It’s just a hypothetical question.”

“I don’t know. I can’t imagine it.”

“Jeez.”

Sand rolls his eyes and shifts his gaze back to the opposite stand. The performances go on one after another. Everyone laughs joyously before it all shatters, replaced by pressure as it’s finally our turn.

“Are you ready, guys?”

“Yesssssssss.” No~~

“Wait for the signal and start.” I take a deep breath and exhale, my heart drumming. I’m most scared of making mistakes and ending up embarrassing our university.

Seeing my dorm mates' legs shaking, I feel relieved. Many people are more nervous than me.

In the zone, our cheerleaders shout the signal and we start performing the first song we've practiced for a long time. How fun that is. We all rise and sing our anthem to move the audience with our love for the engineering department.

Nobody has any idea these guys are the same people who skipped the cheering activity to play games at the dormitory. Sigh.

The first song is over. As the rhythm of the drums awakens our vigor, we raise the signs beside us accordingly. I'm unsure if I'm doing it perfectly because my brain has zoned out. I let my body work by instinct.

We perform more than ten songs, breaking our sweat on each one, before the pressure is transferred to the performances replacing the cheerleaders. Now, the guys and I only have to...

"Woooooooo!! Woooohooo!!"

We cheer for them.

I need some throat lozenges. My vocal chords can't endure it anymore.

"The host's performance is over. Give them a round of applause."

"Yeah!!"

The applause comes from all directions. I wipe the sweat off my face, relieved like I've never been before since everything has gone smoothly. Any mistakes are acceptable. We can do nothing but watch the next performance.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaa!" The scream reaches my ears. I swiftly turn toward the source of the voice, wondering what they're going crazy for when the next performance hasn't started.

"P'Arc is here! Waaaaaaaaaaaaah."

That's all it takes to understand everything.

"He came here earlier when we performed. Below the stand."

"How nice of him to show up for us. Put away my body. I'm going to die..."

"Same here. My idol," Pipo says, resting his head on my shoulder emotionally. Damn, how dramatic.

"P'Arc, are you here to give the freshmen encouragement?"

"No. I just passed by."

"Quit lying. You can be honest. The freshmen will be happy."

"Whatever you want to think," says Arc, glancing up at me.

What am I supposed to do in this situation...?

Right. I drop my eyes, avoiding his fierce gaze. I don't know why, but my feelings are a hot mess.

"Do you have anything to say to the freshmen?" asks the senior. The tall guy shakes his head and points at the stand on the other side, where the performance proceeds. I know he doesn't wish to interrupt anyone, but he has no clue that his appearance is already a distraction.

Because everyone is staring at him, not the performance on the other side...

Once all performances are over, it's the time everyone has been anticipating.

"Wrap up the show for us, Superior Prince. The freshmen really hope they won't be placed last." Another laughter draws the attention of the students from the other universities.

"Don't be sad. Be proud no matter what place you get. It's not a serious competition."

"Awwwwwww, so cool!"

But Arc's face...

Completely emotionless.

"So cool. So fucking cool. Damn it, I'm shy," Yo, sitting above me, can't contain his joy. The senior then stops us.

"All right, guys. Now that you've received Arc's encouragement, come down to get your food. The ranks will be announced in half an hour."

"Yeah!"

“Get down in line.”

“Okayyy.”

The freshmen line up to get food and form circles to eat like usual. The menu is as simple as ever: chicken with basil and fried eggs.

I pick up the chillies off for a moment before someone greets me and sits next to me out of habit.

“P’Fah, let’s eat.”

“Yeah.” It’s my buddy. “Here you go.” Besides his food, Tongfah brings snacks and water.

“That’s my job.”

“It doesn’t matter. You gave me a lot already.”

“Wow, you’re as nice as you look,” I praise, exaggerating. Who would’ve thought someone would interrupt us after hovering behind us for who knows how long?”

Fuck, I thought it was a ghost about to break my neck.

“Let me sit here.”

“Sure. Guy, scoot. P’Arc is going to sit with us.” Everyone quickly makes room for the Superior Prince. Arc successfully settles next to me.

“Where’s your food?” I ask, noticing he’s empty handed.

“I don’t want to eat,” he answers like a child.

“You’ll be hungry.”

“I want the brownie and juice.”

“My buddy bought these for me.”

“Stingy brat.” Arc flicks my forehead and shifts his eyes to my food.

“No. This is mine. Go get yours.”

“Did I say I’d eat it?”

“You looked.”

“Can I eat you up if I look at you?” Fuck! I’m scared.

"Tell me what you want."

"Will you give it to me if I tell you?"

"No."

"Then don't ask." Arguing with Arc is the silliest thing in my life. I'd rather save my energy to fart.

Shortly after we eat and chat, the ranks are officially announced. I almost choke, unable to believe we're in third place.

The reward is so grand that I'm on the verge of tears. The president runs over with a delighted face to receive it as we agreeably shout there's no need! Fuck! I'm sick of the tin cans of biscuits.

My stomach dreads it since I've been snacking on it. Since I started my first year here, we've been provided tin cans of biscuits for all activities. This time is no different. Worse, the third place winner is rewarded with five. The sophomores pour the biscuits onto the plates and distribute them at the speed of light.

"You eat it."

"You eat it. I'm gonna throw up."

Refusing to eat, we push the plate to one another for some time. Finally, Arc ceases his war by putting the pineapple biscuit into his mouth. And why wouldn't the Superior Prince's admirers follow? They wolf down the snacks.

We have stick biscuits, pineapple biscuits, and rolled wafers.

I rarely get to eat the last one, so I can enjoy it with my meal to an extent.

A low platform for special performances is located at the front. There will be a basketball match in the afternoon, which Tongfah will play.

"Do you have plans after this?" asks Tongfah. I flick my eyes from my food to him.

"No. Why?"

"It's nothing. Just hoping you come to cheer for me."

“Sure, I’ll do my best,” I say, smiling at my buddy. I turn my attention back to my food.

Arc, you piece of shit.

“Nooooo. That’s mine,” I whine at the sight of my half eaten roll of wafer moving Arc’s mouth. Unabashed, Arc responds in a cheeky voice.

“What?”

“Didn’t you see I bit it?”

“I did.”

“Get a new one.” That one was soaked on my saliva. Why did he eat it?

“No. I wanted to try it.”

“Try a new one. Why did you take mine?”

“Are you stingy?”

“No. The one you ate had my saliva on it.”

“I don’t mind.” Wow, I’m speechless.

Sometimes we can’t use reason with this kind of person. Arc behaves like no one else, and I believe no matter how close we get, everything will be the same. I will never understand him, so I should just go back to my food.

My third-year peer mentor lets my dorm mates ask him questions and praise him. Tongfah then gets called over by his friends from the same university, leaving me alone. Soon the circle of biscuit eaters becomes excited again.

My friends slap my thighs repeatedly when someone joins us.

“Can I sit here?”

Pretty, fair-skinned, slender, smelling so good!

Holy shit!! The legendary Brink with one hundred and ninety thousand followers.

“Y...Yes. Suuuuuure.” My friends make room for her with more enthusiasm than when their idol showed up. It’s a rare occasion, though we’re aware that she’s here for no one else but Arc.

The engineering princess sits cross legged next to her buddy with food and a bag of water in her hands. I know because all her movements are in my eyes.

"Where did you come from?" asks Arc, startling my friends. The tall guy isn't even gentle to her. You heartless piece of metal.

"Heaven."

"Are you dead?"

"P'Arcccc, I'm an angel."

"Oh."

"I bought you water. Maybe I shouldn't give it to you."

"I don't want it, anyway."

"Are you kidding?"

"No."

Ah... they seem really close. Even though it's been a few days, it feels like they've known each other for ages. Not to mention how them being together attracts people's attention.

I'm jealous! But aside from that feeling... I don't know. It's weird.

Suddenly losing my appetite, I put my spoon down and close the lid of my food box. I drink water from the bottle, glancing at the good looking people chatting away. My friends also quieten, knowing no one can get in between them.

This is the attraction between two people, huh?

I hope his crush has no idea. Maybe it doesn't matter. A handsome guy like Arc can choose.

"Give me water," says Arc in a low voice.

"Sure. I bought it for you," Brink says cheerfully. How the fuck can she be so cute?

"No, no. I was talking to my peer mentee."

"Huh?" I murmur in confusion, instantly back to reality.

"Let me drink your water."

"I drank it. My mouth touched the bottle."

"Yeah. Give it."

"No." I hold my water bottle tightly.

"Do you want to get bitten?"

"You think I'm scared? Go on and bite me," I challenge.

Who would've thought he would actually do it? Arc drapes his heavy arm around my neck and squeezes it to his chest like a snake. Ugghhhgh, you moron. I can't breathe.

"Will you give it to me?" he asks. I try to answer but have no strength, so I slap his leg nonstop to declare defeat.

"Take it. Take whatever you want." I toss my water bottle at my third-year peer mentor once free. Instead of feeling sorry for me, my friends put their thumbs up and clap to praise their idol's bold action. Love me a bit, will you?!

"That's it."

"It hurts. Look at my neck. It's red!" I yank my shirt collar open, but Arc remains unbothered. He grabs my neck and whispers for the only two of us to hear.

"Devourable."

My hair stands on ends. I glance at his charming face before asking.

"Who? Don't tell me it's your buddy. You're mean."

"Why?"

"You want to devour her."

"It's fine, then."

"..."

"Because I actually want to devour you."

I look at the match schedule on the projector screen after my friends split up to take care of their buddies, play sports or flirt with girls. I actually want to join all of them, but I have an important mission: to cheer Tongfah at the basketball game.

My digital watch strikes half past one in the afternoon. I rise to the basketball court, but Yeepoon runs to me breathlessly before I can do that.

“Aaaaaaaaarm.” She’s going to ask me for a favor for sure, given her mannerism and expression.

“Yes?”

“I have to watch P’Jet play table tennis. Do you have any plans?”

“No. I’m just going to cheer for my buddy at the game.”

“Good. Take this camera and take some photos of cute boys for me.” Yeepoon grabs her DSLR camera from her backpack and passes it to me without waiting for my answer.

“Why me?”

“You’re an admin. Did you forget?”

“But my friends don’t know I am. I’ll be exposed, carrying the camera around.”

“Hundreds of people here carry cameras around. No one will know. Find some gems this time to hype up our page.”

“I’m the only gem here.”

“Did you skip breakfast? Your mind isn’t in the right place.”

That fucking hurts. I’d rather get beaten up...

Yeepoon walks off in another direction after giving me a mission, leaving me with this heavy camera. Despite my unwillingness, it’s unavoidable.

My first goal is the basketball court. One of the cute boys who will get his photos taken is undoubtedly Tongfah. Since the players are still on the sideline, I stride toward my tall buddy.

“P’Fah, can I take photos of you?”

Tongfah, in his super cool tank top, turns to me. “For what?”

“A senior’s request for their page. I’m asking you because you’re handsome.”

“Okay. Do whatever you’d like.”

“Ooooooh, you’re so kind. Can you pose for me?” Tongfah complies, allowing me to capture multiple shots.

“Is that enough?”

“Yeah. Your photos will get tons of likes on the page for sure.”

“Why don’t you photograph Arc? He’s much more popular.”

The name makes my heart race for a reason. I think of him often, and his actions often cause instability in my heart as well. It happened during the meal earlier, but I couldn’t bring myself to ask. I kept being quiet and separated from him when the afternoon activity began.

Who would’ve thought he would be mentioned again after I fled from him?

“I won’t take photos of him. Sick of his face.”

“Really?”

“Huh?”

“It’s nothing. It’s about to start. Go take the photos of someone else here and take me out for a meal after the game.”

“Sure. Do your best.”

“Yeah.” Tongfah waves his hand and the whistle goes off. The players from both teams enter the court, while I stay close by to photograph the game and the cheering teams from each university.

There are plenty of eye candies as I have the privilege to temporarily own Yeepoon’s camera to take photos of the girls, though I can’t post them on the cute boy page.

“Nong Arm.”

“Oh, P’Copp.” It’s Arc’s friend who greets me all of a sudden.

“It’s been a while.”

“Because you’re not handsome enough.”

“You brat. Are you being a pervert today, taking photos of people?”

“No. A senior asked me to help her capture photos for her page.”

"You can photograph me. I don't mind."

"No, thanks. It's a waste of storage."

"No wonder Arc wants to bite you. You're too adorable." Arc again. Copp also talks weirdly.

You can't bite someone you adore!

"Is that a compliment or an insult?"

"Forget it."

"I'll go take photos now."

"Wait. I have a question." Copp seizes my arm, halting my mission to seek handsome boys.

"What is it?"

"Are you single?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Just answer me." Arc's friend is nosy.

"Yes."

"What's your type?"

"Pretty."

"Oh."

"Wait. Why are you asking me this? Just admit you're being a matchmaker. My heart is open right now. I can even scrub toilets."

Copp bursts out laughing at my long description, bewildering me. It takes some time for him to reply.

"Yeah. Someone has a crush on you."

"Really?!!" My eyes pop out. "Who? Tell me."

"I can't,"

"Let me guess. Is that person in the same department as us?"

“Yeah.”

“Ooooooh, and... is that person a freshman?”

“No.”

“Oh. That’s fine. I like older people. They’re experienced.” My love life is about to get interesting. Pipo will be left alone now since Sand is in love as well.

“You’re already into that person even though you don’t know who it is? So easy.”

“There’s nothing wrong with opening my heart. When will I get to know them?”

“Ask Arc.”

“They know Arc?”

“Whoa. They’re besties. But I don’t know if he’ll tell you.”

“A secret for a secret. I know Arc has a crush on someone, but I have no idea who it is. Can you tell me so I can negotiate with him?”

Looking sly, Copp cracks an unsettling laugh and speaks in an amused voice.

“Why would I expose my friend’s secret.”

“Damn it.”

“I can’t meddle with this one. I think he’s serious.”

“Was he never?”

“I’d never known what kind of person he was into, since I never saw him liking someone, but I recently learned his type. You should wait for him to say it.”

“Why so mysterious?”

“What are you talking about?” I’m startled by the guy in our topic marching toward us with frighteningly harsh eyes.

Why is he here?

“It’s nothing. I’m off. Take care of my nong Arm.” Copp jokes out of the blue. It messes with my head because I have no clue why Arc snaps back right away.

“Whose? Say it again.”

"Mine."

"Wanna get your ass beaten?"

"No, thanks. I don't fancy a kick, but I fancy your peer mentee. He's squishable."

"Go the hell away."

"Nong Arm, wanna drink cola with the guys?" Copp waves me over. Before I can follow, the third-year guy, Arc, grabs my wrist.

"Is he your dad to obey?"

"You're not my dad either. Why should I listen to you?"

"Are you going to be like this?"

"Are you going to be like this?" I mock.

"You'll get it."

"Get what?"

"You can't even imagine."

"How scary. I'm so scared."

"Go on. So annoying." The burly guy walks off, leaving the fierce guy glowering at me like he's about to rip me apart.

"I...I wasn't talking about you. We were simply chatting about basketball, photos, the cute boy page, something like that."

"Suspicious."

"Not at all."

"You're being suspicious."

"Wooooow, the cheerleaders from the other universities are super handsome. Gotta take their photos for P'Yeepoon," I change the subject. I cunningly raise the camera at eye level and take multiple shots. But wait...?

"Move." Arc is in the frame, blocking my targets.

"You can photograph me."

“You hate that. Move. I’m trying to work.”

“Go ahead.” says Arc, standing still, so I walk away.

The game is getting intense. Tongfah scores several three pointers as the crowd cheers for him. I adjust the shutter speed slightly to capture the gorgeous view of him shooting the ball, but...

Arc, you son of a bitch.

The background is blurry because the camera focuses on his face.

“Move. I’ll take your photos for the page if you don’t.”

“Sure.”

“Don’t challenge me.”

“I’m not challenging you. Do it if you want. You have my permission today.” I can’t believe those words come from the Superior Prince, who’s insanely protective of his photos. I don’t understand what kind of mind game he’s playing, but I refuse to let this chance slip away.

“Stand right there. I’m going to photograph you.”

Arc complies without a word. I place the camera over my eye again. When it focus on the tall guy, I press the button.

CLICK!

He’s fucking hot...

My heart races at Arc even through the camera lenses. Although we see each other often and are part of the same gear code, not to mention we’re both men, it affects me so much. I can’t imagine how crazy Arc’s admirers would be if they were in my position.

“Did you do it?” asks Arc.

“A...Ah, yeah. Let me adjust the lighting.”

“Copp talked about me, didn’t he?”

“Ah, I didn’t ask. He mentioned you himself,” I check the photos briefly before raising the camera again to photograph better ones.

"What did he say?"

"He said you were never serious until you found that person. How unbelievable is that?"

"Why?"

"I thought you were a playboy, a handsome guy who can choose. Doesn't your heart flutter for your pretty buddy?"

"Someone else makes my heart flutter."

CLICK!

I take another photo and try to find other angles to continue.

"I'm happy for that person."

"What's to be happy about?"

"What do you mean?"

"That person doesn't know."

"Tell them."

"Can I say it to the camera?"

"Go ahead."

"I like you."

"...!!"

CLICK!

I press the button before I can stop. On the camera, Arc has the brightest smile, enough to give me a sudden heart attack. Even though he didn't say it to me. Breathe in and out...

The basketball game ends with the Chiang Mai team's victory. I put the camera strap on my neck and view numerous photos of Arc and no one else. Yeepoon will kill me.

Not going anywhere, Arc sticks with me like a haunting ghost. Even when my buddy returns to the sideline, the Superior Prince doesn't budge.

"Nong Arm, I'm starving. Let's find something to eat." says Tongfah, drenched in sweat yet still charming.

"Let me join you, I'm also hungry."

"Sure."

"Arm, go wait by the car. I need a word with your buddy."

"Okay."

I obey Arc's order without asking, leaving the Superior Prince and the campus prince to talk. Ten minutes later, my third-year peer mentor follows me to the parking lot without Tongfah.

"P'Arc, where's P'Fah?"

"Something came up with the seniors."

"Do we wait?"

"No. Let's eat together. Just the two of us."

"I see. All right. I'll buy him some snacks on the way back."

"Yeah."

Another meal goes by with me driven up the wall by the cheeky guy. We eat, bicker, and check the photos. Soon Arc drives me back to the department building to participate in activities.

We have a surprise at night. It's a music festival. The engineering rock band from our department is getting prepared to do their best. Before their performance, a third-year group performs folk songs for the opening.

Tonight is a carefree night before we return to our academic lives tomorrow. We're supposed to absorb as much happiness as possible while we can.

My dorm mates sway back and forth to the rhythm, singing along engrossed. Arc catches up with his friends. Everyone spends time with their people. Wishing to hang out with my buddy, I ask each of my friends of his whereabouts.

"Has anyone seen P'Fah?"

"No. But he had a meal with Yo and the guys after the game."

"Didn't he help out the seniors?"

“It was a break, idiot. What about you? Why didn’t you take care of your buddy, leaving him to eat with someone else? You suck.” Sand shakes his head. And his hips.

“P’Arc said...” Before I finish, something hits me. “I’ll be right back.”

“Arm, where are you going?”

“Gonna talk to my peer mentor.”

I advance in the dark and dizzy lights in the activity area to where the tall guy is. Arc stands with his friends in a corner with his arms crossed over his chest. Spotting me, he walks forward.

We meet halfway.

“P’Arc.”

“What?”

“What did you say to my buddy? My friends told me he ate with someone else because I didn’t take care of him.”

“Nothing.”

“Be honest.”

“I told him you felt uncomfortable taking care of your buddy and wanted to eat alone with me.”

“Ugggggggggh, I knew it. How could you say that? P’Fah must have been hurt.”

“How do you know?”

“I don’t. I’ll go apologize to him. Stay here. I’ll come back to deal with you.”

“Whatever. Hurry back.”

“Just wait.” I point at him threateningly and spin away.

I sweep my eyes over the crowd in the activity area as the music hinders my hearing, making it difficult to call my buddy.

Tongfah picks up my call a moment later. It takes dozens of minutes for us to have a proper conversation and locate each other.

"It's time for you to go all out!"

"Wooooooooooooo!"

"Are you ready?"

"Yesssssssssss!"

"I can't hear you. Are you ready, engineering folks?"

"Yesssssssssss~~"

FWIP!!

The lights are turned off and the excited shouts get louder. Despite the dark and the upbeat music being a hindrance to our conversation, I must do it...

"Hey, I'm sorry for today."

"For what?"

"For leaving you to eat with my friends. I didn't know P'Arc would say that."

"What did you say?" Tongfah leans down and asks the question like he can't hear me. I repeat my words slowly.

"I found out what P'Arc said to you."

"Hmm? You did?" Tongfah seems slightly surprised.

"Yeah. I didn't want to eat with P'Arc alone and wasn't uncomfortable taking care of you."

"Do you really know what he said?" asks Tongfah.

"Yes."

"You don't."

"I do. P'Arc told me."

"What did he say...?"

"He said I said I was uncomfortable eating with you."

"He didn't say that to me."

"What did he say?"

“#%!^\$@%\$^...”

“Can you say it again? I can’t hear you.” The music suddenly intensifies. The singer’s voice drowns out every word from his mouth, making it indecipherable.

Tongfah repeats it multiple times but fails. In the end, we wait until the song is over to continue. Three minutes, not too long...

Finally, a silence.

“What did P’Arc tell you?”

“He said...”

“...”

“Stay away from my person!”

I swiftly turn to the source of the voice. The deadpan face and familiar eyes are a few centimeters away from me. I can’t believe he just said that.

That one sentence answers all the questions in my heart.

How many times am I your person? I’ve lost count...

Chapter 11

Not Stupid, Just Unable to Keep Up

I lean my back against the headboard, listening to the showerhead for nearly ten minutes. As everyone got drained from the engineer friendship festival, we all returned to the dormitory without a wrap up assembly or playing games together like the other nights.

Sand jumped into the bathroom first. I guess it’s taking him forever because he’s busy singing the love song with strong emotions. As expected from a person falling head over heels. I bet he would’ve video called the nursing princess had he not been showering.

Rrrr...!

The ringtone draws my attention from the showering guy to the name on the screen.

When I see who it is, my brain becomes a shutdown computer, completely empty.
Feeling this never before felt excitement. I don't even know what to say after picking up the call.

"Answer the phone, dumbass. The ringtone is about to crack the toilet." Sand tells me off, craning his head with wet hair out. He refuses to go back to shower unless I pick up the call.

"Yeah. On it."

"Why are you hesitating? Is it your lender trying to get their money back?"

"No. It's my haunting ghost," I say and answer the phone.

The you know who must be vexed, and he is. He speaks in such a sinister voice.

[What are you doing? What took you so long to pick up?]

Are you my peer mentor or my lover? What's with these questions?

"I...I'm taking off my clothes for a shower."

Rrrr...!

Upon my reply, Arc video calls me immediately. You motherfucker! What a fucking moron. I answer it in shock, exposing my lie.

[What? You're not naked.]

"Are you for real? I was joking."

[Liar.]

"Why are you video calling me? What the hell do you want?"

[Just wondering if you arrived at the dorm.]

"I did. I'm waiting for Sand to finish showering. What does Mr. Anol want?" I wish to end this conversation soon, feeling unwell at the sight of his face on the screen. Sometimes I don't know how to act in front of him.

[I was going to ask about my photos. Don't you dare post any of them.]

"I know. Who would do that to a private person like you?" I purse my lips. "What do you want me to do with the photos, though? Should I send them to the angel gear code group chat? P'Yeepoon will be thrilled."

[Delete them.]

“Oh.”

[You can't make use of them, anyway.]

“Why did you tell me to take them, then?”

[I just wanted to mess with a brat.] Fuck. He's driving me insane.

“You're annoying.”

[Whatever. Take a shower and go to bed. Don't let me find out you're going to a bar somewhere. I'll beat your ass.]

“I'm sooooo scared. I'm not going, anyway. I don't have money for the booze.”

[Yeah. That's all I had to say.]

“Okay. Good night.” I gaze at the guy on the screen, waiting for him to hang up. My hope dims as Arc won't end the call. “Hang up.”

[Okay.]

But he keeps haunting me with his face.

“Hey, if you don't hang up, I will.”

[...] He stays quiet, and I don't dare to hang up.

“Tell me what you want.” It's fucking hilarious to argue with him about ending the call.

What sin did I commit in the past life?

[How hot headed you are.]

“Yeah. My head is boiling.”

[Cheeky brat.]

“You're the cheeky one.”

[Hanging up. I'm happy now that I made you angry.]

“What's with you?”

Not replying, Arc puts on a jeering face and hangs up, leaving me in confusion. Besides the complicated calculus, Arc is the person I'm too stupid to figure out...

“What were you talking about?” Sand asks in an annoying voice after my conversation with my peer mentor. I turn my head to find him leaning against the door frame, soaked.

“None of your business.”

“You were talking to P’Arc.”

“Right. What’s your problem?”

“Strange.” I fix my eyes on my roommate’s puzzled face as he walks over and sits on the edge of his bed. “It sounded like you were dating.”

Whooooooooooooa, I fight the urge to spring up and smack his head. What made you think that way, my dear friend?

“Funny.”

“I’m not joking. It’s really weird. Don’t play with my idol’s heart and say I didn’t warn you.”

“Who would play with your Superior Prince’s heaaaaaaaaart, you idiot?”

“You said it. I’m protective of him.”

“Seriously, do you love me at all?”

Come to think of it, none of the guys has ever taken my side. They always push me aside.

“Do I have to love you? All right, then.”

How unfortunate of me to have a friend like this.

To prevent any more pain, I decide to turn my back on Sand and turn on my laptop to mark the end of our conversation.

Sand doesn’t care, whistling while getting dressed in a good mood. Once done, he hops onto his bed and plays on his phone. Without anything to do, I insert the SD card into my laptop and select the photos I took in the afternoon.

Everyone in the photos is good looking, but...

Eighty percent of the photos are Arc’s.

Hesitation grows in my mind. I push the keyboard to view his photos over and over, unable to delete them despite the request.

How handsome.

What a shame...

I did my best to take his photos. He even smiled in some of them, which is extremely rare.

"Hey," I say to my best friend. Sand lifts his head and frowns in puzzlement. "Well...Have you ever hesitated to delete the photos you took?"

"What's with your artistic mood?"

"Answer the question, will you?" If he keeps messing with me, I'll kick his ass.

"Of course I have. Photos are memories. It's sad to erase memories."

"Right. How did you bring yourself to delete them?"

"Oh, I could because I didn't care anymore."

Damn! Sand started so emotionally just to ruin it all with his blatant indifference.

"If I can't, does it mean I care?"

"Yeah."

I can't figure it out. Perhaps our bond as the gear code brothers is too strong. Sometimes Arc feels important to me, So do Yeepoon and Jet. However... the levels of their importance are different.

"What are you doing?"

I turn to the guy across from me and instinctively close my laptop.

"Nothing. I just checked the photos of cute boys that I took. P'Yeepoon asked me to do it for her page."

"Is she the admin?"

"Yeah. She revealed herself after P'Jet caught her."

"She never needed to hide it. Work is work. Let me see. Are there any photos of me?"

"No. You're not that handsome." I push my laptop behind me, too stupid to realize how suspicious that is. Sand narrows his eyes in suspicion.

"What are you hiding?"

"Nothing."

"Let me see."

"Just wait for the page to upload the photos. P'Yeepoon will start tomorrow."

"Can't I see them first? I'm your friend" I'm reluctant, unsure if I should allow him or not.

Sand, faster than me, steps out of his bed and charges toward me.

You assholeeeeeeeeeee! Too late. He extends his hand and opens my laptop.

"Ooooooooooooooooooh, my idol!"

"P'Yeepoon took those."

"Who asked?"

Fuck you!

"No one. I just wanted to tell you. Got a problem?"

"Haha," Sand laughs dryly and shifts his eyes to the laptop screen. My heart thumps as he views the gallery. "Arm."

"W...What?"

"Did P'Yeepoon only take photos of P'Arc?"

"Yeah. I only took a few."

"Really?"

"Yeah. See? Different angles. Different skills."

"Who did you photograph?"

"Here. P'Tongfah."

"Only two? There are two more guys, and the rest is P'Arc."

"I'm not good at this."

“Weird. The times you photographed P’Fah and P’Arc are super close. How come P’Yeepoon returned from the table tennis game this quickly? She even left her camera with you after she took his photos.”

“ ... ”

“Didn’t she take her camera back?”

“ ... ”

“Aw, P’Arc is smiling. My idol is fucking gorgeous.”

“Give it back if you’re done.”

“Who took this photo?” Sand digs deeper. I keep a straight face, determined to go all the way with my lie.

“Phi...P’Yeepoon.”

“Amazing. She made him stand still and even smile.”

“Right?”

“Wait a second. I have something to show you.” I furrow my brow in perplexity but remain silent, watching my roommate rush back to his bed and return with his phone. “Take a look, Arm.”

Sand goes to his gallery and scrolls past the countless photos he took in the afternoon until...

“Why are you showing me this?”

There’s nothing in the photo except his stupid face, but then he zooms in the background.

Zoom in.

Zooooooooom in.

Zooooooooooooom in.

“Ta-daaaaaaaaaaaa~”

“...!!”

“Is this you and P’Arc? He looks happy being photographed by you.”

“Ah...”

“Answer wisely. Make one wrong move and the guys will hear about this.”

Fuck, I did wrong. I’m sorry. Boooohooo...

Today is the academic day of the engineer friendship festival.

Luckily, Sand isn’t here to tease me, supporting his fourth year peer mentor’s presentation at their booth.

I broke a sweat from nervousness last night from being interrogated by my best friend. Unable to deny anything, I admitted I took the photos, but we knew it was all due to Arc’s demanding behavior.

Arc wouldn’t allow me to photograph anyone else, hence the gallery full of his face. It was hard to reject him since we are in the same gear code.

“All full. Especially your buddy’s booth. What do we do?” Pipo mumbles, looking around and sighing deeply.

“Let’s check out another booth, like... the project from the electrical engineering group from another university.”

“I’m about to puke diodes. Can we not?”

“What do you want to do, master Pipo?”

“Play on the claw machines at the mall.”

“Fuck.”

“Go check other booths and we can catch up during the afternoon activities.”

“Okay.”

The said activity will take place at around three in the afternoon. We’ll give our buddies gifts for the last time before they leave tomorrow. The special part is we can give those we admire flowers and gifts as well. The thought already excites me.

I bought something for someone. It doesn't matter that much since there's no one in my mind. Yesterday evening, my dorm mates persuaded each other to prepare gifts for any girls who might give us flowers. We might fall in love during the activity, and it might develop into something more.

"I'm off,"

"Don't get caught and come back in time."

"Yes, dad." Pipo bows to me pretentiously and spins off through the crowd in silence.

All alone, I stand in the middle of these people with no purpose.

As today is for the seniors to show off their talents, the academic booths are lively and not as boring as I initially expected. Tongfah displays his workpieces grandly, his area is filled with students.

The booths of popular people are packed with engineering students. What about Arc's? Empty. He's nowhere to be seen, leaving his friends in charge. Invisible. Even I have no clue where the Superior Prince is or what he's up to.

"Arm," calls the familiar piping voice. I glance around in confusion and soon spot the girl running toward me.

"Hey." My second-year peer mentor looks cuter than ever, either to check her popularity or to make Jet jealous for fun.

"Did you bring my camera? I need it to take photos of cute boys for the page."

"Yeah." I fish for the camera in my backpack and return it to its owner.

"Thank you so much. Did you take lots of photos yesterday?"

"No. I think I'm the most handsome."

"I'm in tears."

Fuck. She looks so done.

Yeepoon checks the gallery and views each photo with satisfaction. I'm relieved because all of Arc's photos have been removed. I deleted them last night.

From the camera, not from my computer.

“We’ll get plenty of likes from these. Thank you.” Yeepoon turns off the camera and shoves it in her Louis Vuitton bag, which she once claimed was high quality counterfeit. “Have you bought anything for your buddy?”

“Yes.”

“Get ready for this afternoon,” she says, smiling.

I scratch my head. “For what?”

“Ugggggggh, for flowers and gifts. My peer mentee is super handsome. You must have tons of admirers.” Awwwww, I’m shy, but I don’t want to deny it. It’s the truth.

“You’re exaggerating.” Okay let’s humble a little, though Yeepoon can see through me.

“Don’t embarrass the angel gear code. We compete every year to see who gets the most gifts. P’Jet won last year. I was so sad because I got only two less than him.”

“Oh, what about P’Arc?”

“Gone. I don’t even know if he’ll turn up today.”

Erm... Okay! Sure.

“Where are your friends, leaving you standing here like an idiot?” Yeepoon messes with me again.

“We split up to browse booths. I don’t know where to go. Can I stay with you for a couple of hours?” Since I used to consider hitting on her but ended up being her peer mentee, I’ll put this privilege to use.

“Suuuuuuuuure.”

My loneliness vanishes into thin air because Yeepoon refuses to stay in place. She photographs loads of people, fills our stomachs with food, and introduces me to several students from the other universities to the point I get very tired. Once it’s almost time for the activity, she lets me go back to the dormitory to get my things.

Pipo carries ten plushies back to the dormitory. He keeps one for his buddy and the rest for the girls.

Sand counts his money on the edge of his bed to buy flowers for the girls. Ugh, this moron. Did he forget he was talking with the nursing princess?

As for me, I've prepared something for Tongfah and another thing for someone.

I have no idea what most girls are into and no sense of buying gifts. I simply picked a bag in a store yesterday since my best friends pointed out they must love it. I trusted them.

"You think she'll like a Hello Kitty bag?" I ask again as we exit the dormitory to head to the activity area at the department building.

"Yeah. Girls like cute things," Pipo confirms, and Sand chimes in as the vote of confidence.

"Right."

"Okay, I trust you."

"You'd better hurry up. Ah...Let's catch up at the department building."

"Are you not going with...?" Before I finish, all my attention is hogged by the tall guy in front of me. Arc pulled over at the footpath before the dormitory as if to wait for someone.

"How did you get here?" I walk toward him while my friends swerve in another direction.

"By car." Right. You couldn't possibly fly here.

"I didn't see you at the department building. I thought you were sleeping in your apartment."

"Why would I have slept? There's an activity today."

"I can't believe it. I heard you didn't turn up last year."

"What a know-it-all."

"Well, I'm smart and handsome," I say, proudly.

All engineering students are requested to wear workshop shirts today. Arc is in his new one, while I'm in the one he gave me on his birthday. I look quite cool.

"What's that?" asks Arc. I drop my gaze to the objects in my hands.

"Oh, my buddy's gift."

"This bag."

"No. This one is for a girl. I'll give it to whoever gives me a flower."

"They wouldn't like that kind of bag."

"How do you know that?" He destroys my hope.

"It looks stupid."

"Ugh, I'm hurt."

"Just gift your buddy."

"I spent money on this. I bought it. It's expensive."

"Okay, I'll keep it for you. Now hope in. I'm giving you a ride." The younger must obey the older. Seeing no point in arguing, I get in his car.

Arc drives me to the department building before batching up with his gang with the Hello Kitty bag.

"It's time for the highlight of the day. Are you excited, guyssssssss?"

"Yes!"

"Where are the engineering students who wish to express their love?"

"Woohoooooooo!! Woohoooooooo!!!"

The MC hosts the activity on the stage. Her speciality is talking without breathing for minutes. Not to mention her continuous spontaneous speech that even the professionals can't beat. It takes nearly an hour for the department band to perform. It's the signal of the beginning of the gift-exchanging activity.

The academic booths are instantly replaced with space to express love.

There are lines of flower stalls with various styles and special offers for the customers. Roses and daisies are selling the best. The extreme ones prefer marigold garlands.

I whip out my phone to call Tongfah, but he shows up with another person.

“P’Fah.”

“Hey. You look lonely.” I fix my eyes on the guy slightly shorter than me, not the speaker. He’s fucking adorable.

Yeah... he’s a boy. But some boys are adorable.

“Let’s introduce you guys first. This is June, a sophomore. June, this is Arm, the one I told you about.” The simple introduction begins and ends in a flash.

“Hey, P’June,” I greet, thinking of the gift. I have a gift for my buddy. This is... the coolest wallet in the world.” I didn’t know what to buy, so I just chose a cool wallet in the store.

“Thank you. This is for you.” Tongfah accepts the wallet and holds out a brown paper bag. I peek inside, hoping for a stack of cash. My dream is crushed at the sight of a ribboned bottle of pomegranate juice.

Fuck my life.

“Thanks a lot. I almost cried.” I hate pomegranates.

“This is from my significant other for you.”

“Huh?” Tongfah passes another paper bag to me, not letting me be confused for long. I almost cry for real because it’s a shirt with ‘everything is bright except your future’ printed on it.

Daaaaaaaaaaaaamn, my life can’t get any worse.

“I bought it because it’s funny. Do you like it?” asks the guy besides Tongfah. I say nothing, stunned.

“ ... ”

“My boyfriend is asking if you like it,” says my buddy, snapping me back to reality. Holy shit!

Tongfah’s significant other is a boy.

Tongfah’s significant other is a boy!

Tongfah’s significant other is a boy!!

And he’s fucking cute. Oh, my god.

"I... I like it. Well... you never told me you were dating someone." I'm stunned and extremely nosy right now.

I flick my eyes between my buddy and his boyfriend back and forth. Despite the unfamiliarity, I can tell from his workshop shirt that he goes to the university nearby. A few stations away.

"I'd been meaning to bring it up but never got a chance. I introduced June to Arc yesterday. He wanted to see you, too"

"What does it have to do with P'Arc?"

"That guy was so possessive that it got annoying. I introduced my boyfriend to him to clear things up."

"Oh, did you guys fight?"

"Forget it."

I hate that way to end the conversation. Without a chance to ask any more questions, I chat with the couple from the other universities and learn more about them.

The guy is June Mithuna, a second-year student. He had a meet-cute with my buddy, Tongfah, at the Engineer Friendship Festival last year. I don't know if the small world, fate, or coincidence led them to finally be in a relationship despite six hundred kilometers between them.

The distance doesn't affect their feelings.

"I'll be off with June. It seems many people will give you flowers. I won't be here to hog the spotlight. It was nice to meet you. See you later..." Tongfah says, smiling and I respond with a smile as well.

"Thank you. It was a pleasure. I hope we see each other again. You, too, June."

"We will."

I watch them until they're out of sight. Love is beyond gender. It knows no bounds. Seeing their cuteness and compatibility, I can't help wondering if I'll run away or accept this kind of love if it ever happens to me.

"Arm, woaaaaaaa! I have a flower for you."

The excited voice reaches my ears. I roll my eyes, letting my second-year peer mentor, who leaped out of nowhere, put a marigold garland on my neck. I mean... the smell is overpowering.

"I'm the first because I want to be your number one."

"No one will approach me because of your marigold garland."

"What? I'm actually giving you one point."

"Thank you." Now I wish to win, but I shouldn't forget my competitors are the Campus Prince, the Engineering Princess, and the unbeatable Superior Prince. They're the fucking Avengers.

"Good luck, nong Arm. I'm rooting for you."

"Same here. Don't make P'Jet jealous."

"He'd better be. I like it."

Yeepoon grins and disappears into the crowd. I catch up with the guys to find the hottest one isn't Sand but Pipo, who flaunts a dozen roses while wiggling his eyebrows.

"I didn't know you were this popular."

"Real men never brag. Our throats will hurt."

"What the fuck? He bought those for girls. Nobody gave any to him."

"Sand, you bastard."

My compliment is worthless. I thought my friend got the girls smitten, but he actually planned to take action himself.

"Ooooooooooh."

The band entertains the engineering students excellently with folk songs, but everyone shifts their attention to one person. Hearing my dorm mates screaming I can't help but look.

"The Superior Prince!"

"P'Arc?"

"P'Arc, kyaaaaaaaaa!"

Arc enters the activity area, stealing all the spotlights. This time is different because he carries a huge bouquet of red roses.

I believe hope sparks in several people's hearts. The question is: who is the unlucky person.

"Woooooow, look at him."

Pipo grits his teeth to contain his excitement.

I stare at Arc's every movement. He's fucking handsome and tall in his workshop shirt and favorite jeans, but what's with that Hello Kitty bag? It contradicts his total looks.

I'm itching to cuss him out because it's the bag I bought for a girl. He snatched it away just like that.

"I'll buy myself a Hello Kitty bag tomorrow!!" Yo announces next to us.

I understand Arc is my dorm mate's idol, but it doesn't mean they have to do everything he does. Open your eyes. How is the Hello Kitty bag cool?!

"P'Arc is walking here. Shit, I'm fucking nervous." My dorm mates become flustered. So do I...

I don't know. My heart pounds harder and harder in time with the tall guy's steps. He locks his sharp eyes on where my friends and I are. He comes closer...and closer until the distance between us decreases.

Arc stops in front of me and extends the rose bouquet, causing stir all over the area.

"Hold it for me," Arc says in a low voice. I remain confused.

"Oh."

I quickly take the bouquet. He just wants me to carry it for him. Ugh, I was overthinking it.

"Where did you buy this?"

"The stall owner at the front forced me."

"You didn't have to make me carry it. Just give it to the one you like."

"No. Just take it back to your dorm."

"Why don't you confess your feelings to your crush?"

"No rush. It'll happen when it does." Arc is oddly relaxed.

"Someone might take them away."

"I already bit them. I'll deal with whoever dares to step in."

Brutal.

"You're super cool, P'Arc. Your bag is fabulous." My friend must've been waiting for a chance to praise his idol for so long that he forgot that... the bag was mine.

"I stole it from a kid."

"Lucky kid." No, I'm not.

"We'll be off to seek our love. See you at the dorm, Arm." Sand suddenly turns off their praising mode for some reason, though you used to go on for three days in a row.

I nod, letting them leave. I'm now alone with Arc.

"You like it?" asks Arc now that we're alone.

"Like what?"

"The bouquet."

"Yeah. It's a shame you'll throw it away."

"I'm not throwing it away. I gave it to you."

"Haha." He tossed the bouquet to me after getting sick of it, basically throwing it away.

"Who gave you the marigold garland?" Arc switches his gaze to my neck.

"P'Yeepoon."

"Oh."

“What about you? Did no one give anything to you?” It’s weird and unbelievable. Besides the bouquet he was forced to buy, how could he get here empty handed?

“P’Arc.” Before he can answer, a group of engineering students from other universities approach us. One of them stretches out a pretty color bag to Arc, yet the tall guy rejects her before she even utters a word.

“Sorry. I already got something from the one I like.”

“Okay, then.”

They come and go in the blink of an eye!

No need to ask why he walked here empty handed anymore. He rejects everyone. Hey! How can he be like this? Very inconsiderate.

“She bought that for you. Why are you being so arrogant?”

“Why should I accept things from people I have no feelings for? The same goes for you. Don’t accept gifts from anyone.”

“You’re a hindrance. Won’t you allow single people to be in love?”

“You got a bouquet from me. Do you want more from someone else?”

“It’s not the same.”

“What an annoying brat.”

“Oh, give back my bag.”

“It’s mine now.”

“How?”

“In exchange for the bouquet.”

“No.”

“Let me bite you to shut you up.”

“Whoa, whoa. You always threaten to bite me when you can’t argue. Are you a feral dog?” The feral dog attacks me right away. Arc wraps his arm around my neck so hard I can barely breathe.

What a jerk to mess with his peer mentee.

After that, a haunting ghost trails after Anon with no debt. Arc follows me everywhere annoyingly, and pushes other people away. No one dares to come to me and Arc at the same time.

The funny thing is Arc still has the Hello Kitty bag on and I carry the huge rose bouquet around despite our intentions of giving them to someone else.

“Hey.”

“Sorry. It’s packed,” says the guy sticking behind me plainly.

I look up at him, my head almost touching his sharp nose. I felt it for a second earlier.

“My hair smells nice. Don’t you worry you’ll faint.”

“How can your filthy hair smell good?”

“Don’t try to ruin my confidence. It doesn’t work.”

“Whatever.” He cracks a dry smile.

I want to sniff my own hair to see if it smells awful, but it’s better to just forget it and change the topic. In the silence, I recall what happened prior to this.

“I met P’Fah’s boyfriend.”

“You did.”

“Yeah. His name is June. Super cute.” I put my thumb up. “But I wonder what you guys fought about to have to clear things up.”

“Why do you want to know?” The tall guy narrows his eyes.

“A nosy person’s nature.”

“Just a misunderstanding. All cleared up.”

“Were you surprised when P’Fah introduced his boyfriend to you.”

“No. What about you?”

"I was a bit shocked, but I understood." The world is moving forward. Now that I've grown up, I realize love and fulfillment aren't limited to one pattern, like human beings' various relationships.

"If a guy confessed to you, what would you do?" My peer mentor acts strange today.

"I'd see if we're compatible."

"In bed?"

"What the fuck?"

"Oh, I thought you meant that."

"I'm talking about our personalities." Only a certain type of person always thinks about this kind of thing and talks about it with no shame.

"What's your type?"

"I said I like someone pretty." If I could choose, I'd prefer a tiny girl because height is my weakness. I wouldn't reveal that to Arc, he'd mock me.

"I'm talking about boys."

"Mm... that's hard."

"..."

"You tell me first so I can copy your answer."

"Who told you to ask back?"

"Come on, tell me. It's not nice to hide things from your peer mentee. If you were to date a boy, what would your type be?"

"I don't know. I guess I'd find someone like you."

My heart races, my face burns...

"W...what if you couldn't find someone like me?"

"I'd just like you."

My head becomes a boiling pot of water with the temperature increasing, then it... explodes.

BOOM!!

If I were to date a boy...

If possible, I'd choose you as well.

The Engineer Friendship Festival is over. Life returns to the ugly cycle.

The Angel Gear Code gathers today to discover the hottest one, judging by the number of gifts and flowers from the Engineer Friendship Festival.

It's clear that Yeepoon is the winner. The second one is Jet, while Arc and I get the last place because we have nothing. The prince-princess couple comforts us by treating us to friend noodles at a restaurant behind the university. They leave after a few bites.

Arc has no choice but to drive me back to the dormitory. But since we've just finished eating, we decided to play on our phones to calm our stomachs.

"This is insane." I get excited after checking the soccer match timetable for tonight.

It's been a while since I took a look, occupied with the cheering practice for the Engineering Friendship Festival. Before I know it, Liverpool will play an important match again.

"What's insane? You or the match?" asks Arc in an even voice.

"The match. We'll win this time."

"Are you sure? Need some help?"

"You can help?"

"Yeah. Come watch the game at my apartment."

"..."

"I'll be insane for sure."

"Whooooa, insane, huh? Let me get my stuff first."

I assume Arc has this luck about him because his teams always win. I'll borrow some of the blessings by watching the game at the Superior Prince's apartment.

"Tell your friend if you're going to stay over. No need to bring any clothes. You can use mine."

“How kind.” I crashed at his place once and felt sorry because I caused quite a lot of trouble. Since he suggested it himself this time, I refused to decline. “Liverpool will win if I go to your apartment, right?”

“Goal after goal.”

“Amazinggggggggg.”

“Is your stomach okay now? We’ll head to my place.”

“Won’t you let me stop by the dormitory to tell the guys?” What’s the rush? The game starts at eleven, and I’m confident my dorm mates will watch it together.

“Just call one of them.”

“Okay.”

A few minutes later, I call my roommate to keep him posted. Sand understands, not saying anything but reminding me to take good care of his idol.

After driving me to his apartment, Arc lets me take a shower first and prepares clothes for me. Once I’m done, he makes me wait in front of the TV and enters the bathroom.

“What are you looking at?”

Ooh~ Why is his crotch bulging?

I can’t imagine what the huge thing is. Maybe it’s a dumbbell.

“Nothing.” I avert my gaze when the tall guy comes out in flimsy navy soccer shorts, topless.

“Are you a pervert?” Arc walks closer and settles beside me on the couch.

“I haven’t thought about anything. Quit blabbering.”

The game begins on time. We’re seated in front of the TV at eleven, excited once it starts.

“Will they win?” I ask.

“Of course. Trust me.”

“I trust you.”

At that moment, I witness a miracle. The team that used to be defeated repeatedly is now excelling. The players are in high spirits because Liverpool scores in twenty minutes.

Arc is a lucky charm!

The game ends with Liverpool unexpectedly winning by three to zero.

Around one in the morning, I follow my peer mentor into his bedroom. Arc's bed is spacious and soft, feeling wonderful under me.

The light is turned off. We're a few inches away from each other. I close my eyes, quickly drifting off, exhausted from the classes and the game, but then...

"P'Arc, mm..." Fuck, I'm trying to sleep, but Arc props his leg on me. "You're heavy."

His leg is mercilessly strong. It's a waste of breath because the god of fire has fallen asleep. I have no choice but to lift his heavy leg off me.

THUD!

His leg is off, replaced by his arm.

"P'Arc, I can't breathe," I whine.

I lift his leg and arm off me and push his large body away with my foot, but it's useless since Arc comes back and hugs me. He even tries to bury his face in my neck.

"O...Ouch, don't bite."

He's biting me in his sleeeeeeeeeep. He's actually a dog.

"Hey, it hurts." He moves from my neck to my shoulder. Damn it!

"Cute. Fucking cute," Arc murmurs with his eyes closed.

Who do you think I am, hmm?

I pinch and hit Arc to wake him up, which works briefly before it repeats. I give up and let the Superior Prince treat me like a bolster to be squished to his heart's content.

The game last night was definitely insane.

I'm also going insane. Shit... it's like I've been jumped by a dozen men, my waist aching from being pressed. I wait until the alarm clock goes off at six and Arc finally opens his eyes to the sunlight. I glower at him.

"You up?" My peer mentor's first words in the morning are super sweet.

So sweet... that I get emotional. I haven't gotten a wink of sleep.

"Do you recall causing trouble last night?"

I sit up and recede to the edge of the bed.

"What?"

"You bit me. Look here, and here. Wah... I'm red all over." I point at my neck and shoulders full of red bruises.

"It happened in my sleep."

How was that possible? He's huge like a buffalo. I couldn't fight it at all.

"I'll never stay over at your place again."

"I'm sorry, okay?"

"No."

"Whatever." Arc doesn't even care. He kicks the blanket off and climbs out of bed. Who's the angry one here?

While Arc takes a shower, I stay in place, sulking. When he's back I start moving. Faster, Arc holds me back, squats down and gazes up with a question.

"Does it hurt?"

"..." His expression stupefies me.

"Arm, let me take a look."

Arc pulls my shirt collar down and inspects my skin with keen eyes. My body palpably burns up, nearly cooking the bruises.

"I...I'm fine now. I'll shower at the dorm."

“Shower here. I’ll go get some ointment.” I was going to be grumpy all day and curse him with dark spells, but now my heart melts.

Arc tosses a towel and some clothes to me and walks away. Once I’ve taken care of my business and exited the bathroom, the tall guy waves me over.

“Sit here.” He pats the stool in front of the vanity.

“Why?”

“Just do it.” The vanity is void of perfumes or any cosmetics for men. There’s only moisturizing sunscreen. I wonder how his skin is this smooth. The world is unfair.

“Don’t bite me.”

“Stupid.” I sit on the stool and Arc tries to turn on the hair dryer, confused with the temperature buttons. Is he seriously an engineering student?

“Do you know how to use it?”

“I just bought it. Never used it.”

“What did you usually do?”

“Let it dry on its own.”

“Why did you suddenly buy a hair dryer?”

“In case you stay over.”

“Funny.” Arc ignores me, focusing on his new electrical device. I can’t help but step in.

“This is the cool-air button. I never used it, though. I’d turn on the fan.”

“Mm, what do I do now? Do I use a comb?”

“Nevermind, I’ll do it.” I reach for the hair dryer in his large hand, but Arc dodges.

“I’ll do it.” What’s with the lovely behavior?

A fierce and jaded guy like the Superior Prince is offering to do something like this?

“I stopped being mad since you apologized. You don’t have to do this.”

“Do I use my fingers or a comb?”

Is he even listening…?

“No comb. Just use your fingers like this...” I touch my hair and run my fingers through it from the roots to the ends. Arc follows my action.

“Your hair is soft.”

“Of course. I clean and take care of it well.” I look in the mirror at myself and the guy behind me in this odd situation. This is my first time being treated like this by Arc. Sometimes... my heart flutters. “Have you done this to anyone?”

“No.”

“Not even your exes?”

“No. I only do it for someone I really like.”

“I’m fucking lucky. Practice a lot. You’ll win your crush’s heart after you master it.”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

It takes around ten minutes to dry my hair. Once it’s dry and styled, the tall guy applies an ointment on the bruises on my neck without asking.

“Does it still hurt?” The bite marks fade, leaving only mild red bruises.

“You must be possessed.”

“Why?”

“You’re being nice to me.” Unbelievably nice. Like a dream.

“Can’t I be nice to you?”

“You were usually harsh.”

“Because you were naughty.”

“I wasn’t. You’re talking nonsense.”

“You’re being naughty, talking back to me.”

“No.”

“Naughty.” Fuck. Let’s just fight.

“I’m the cute peer mentee of the gear code.”

“Still naughty.”

“Ugh.”

“But I like it...”

“...”

“I like you like this so fucking much.”

Chapter 12

Confusing Love of the Peer Mentor and Mentee

“Did my idol give you a ride?” My roommate asks as soon as I open the door.

“Yeah.”

Sand is buttoning his student shirt. I’m still in Arc’s tee and shorts. Well, we’re not in a hurry since the first class starts at ten. It also gives my friend time to interrogate me.

“What happened to your neck?”

“P’Arc moved a lot in his sleep and accidentally scratched my neck.” My friend is as smart as a dog and always onto me. I can’t sell him with a ridiculous lie. That’s why I revealed half of the truth. Being scratched sounds better than being bitten.

“How was last night?”

I exhale a sigh. It seems Sand isn’t suspicious of the bruises on my neck.

“Great. Liverpool won.”

“No. I’m talking about my idol. Was he cool while sleeping?”

“You think he looks cool in all positions?”

The double meaning is fucking disturbing.

“Come on! He’s the Superior Prince!”

“Stupid.” Unwilling to bicker anymore, I spin toward the closet and put on my student shirt from the hanger. My roommate continues blabbering.

“Seriously, aren’t you feeling weird about your peer mentor?” The question comes all of a sudden, baffling me for a second.

“W...Why?”

“You and Arc have been joined at the hip lately.”

“We’re in the same gear code and always catching up with each other. What’s weird about it?”

“My peer mentors don’t do that.”

“People are different.”

“Right. Some people aren’t honest with their feelings.” I turn to Sand upon those words. He sits on the edge of his bed with a stern face and shifts his gaze to the bouquet of withered roses on my desk.

“What are you looking at?”

“The roses are withered. Throw them away.”

“Mind your own business.”

“P’Arc didn’t buy it for you.”

“S...So what? Would you throw away your idol’s flowers?”

“It’s different. I admire him, but you don’t. Or maybe you have a thing for him?” A thing, my ass. He keeps pushing that thought into my head despite knowing we’re like brothersssss.

“Why would I have a thing for him? He’s my peer mentor. And a guy at that.”

“So?”

“I like girls.”

“So?”

“Are you messing with me? Are you even listening?”

“Just wondering. Sometimes you’re not being honest.” I don’t respond, just listening to him going on. “Let me ask you something. If P’Arc liked you and you fell for him, would you open your heart and date him?”

Holy fucking shit!!

"You know that's not going to happen."

"Dumbass, do you not understand a hypothetical situation?"

"No."

"You don't understand, or wouldn't open your heart? Say it."

"It's not going to happen."

"Hypothetically."

"No."

"Arm."

"No!"

Knock, knock, knock.

I'm saved by the bell as someone knocks on the door. The person on the other side barges in without waiting.

"Let's eat," says Pipo, chewing his sucky sandwich. For the first time, I love him more than ever.

"Wait, I'm putting on my belt," I reply, grabbing the belt, my heart drumming in fear of any more questions.

Sand's hypothetical question lingers in my mind. I still can't say what I would do if it happened. More importantly, why would Arc like a dumbass like me.

"Hold up, Arm. What's on your neck?" Shit!!

Pipo shoots his nosiness at me right after Sand. Why are their eyes so sharp? I didn't think the bruises would be visible, so I didn't bring bandages.

"Quit asking about me. Let's eat. I'm hungry."

"Suspicious."

"Bullshit."

"Very well. Let's eat."

Rubbing my neck, I walk to the dormitory cafeteria.

My life continues as usual. I eat and attend my classes. We no longer have so many activities, and the midterm exam is around the corner. Only Sports Day is ongoing, taking several months to complete all competitions. It's still not over.

"P'Arcccccccccc!"

"Is that P'Arc from engineering? He's super cool." The noises draw my attention from my omelets to the other side of the cafeteria.

Despite the distance, I know who he is immediately. The tall guy wears his new navy workshop shirt with his regular Calvin Klein backpack. He carries a plate of food amid the freshmen, standing out even more.

"Holy shit. The Superior Prince is here," my friend cusses in excitement. Many are surprised, and so am I. Arc doesn't usually eat here, especially on a hectic morning like this.

"Do we call him?"

"He might be here with someone else," I oppose, staring at Arc.

"How is that possible when he's turning back and forth like that? If you don't call him, I'll do it." Pipo stands up and waves his hand before shouting to the tall guy in his strangely delighted voice, "P'Arc, wanna sit together?"

Arc turns his head to us quietly, giving us shivers from his extreme handsomeness.

"Arm is also here."

Arc walks towards our table without a word. Among countless people around him, to my surprise, he stands out the most and attracts all my attention.

"What brings you here?" I ask as soon as he places his place on the table and settles opposite me.

"To check my popularity."

"Wow, you do that, too?" Arc usually ran away or got cranky in the crowd. He's acting differently today.

“Right.”

“It works. Everyone is staring at you. Look there... and there. At ten o’clock, the Social Science Princess. And another one behind you. Act normal. Don’t turn around,” I whisper, leaning over. “She’s like a net idol. Super cute.”

“Yeah. Cute.”

“How do you know? You have eyes on the back of your head?”

“I can tell.”

“Amazing.” I lean back and resume, “But I don’t think you should hit on anyone. You already have a crush on someone.”

“Right. They’re much cuter.”

“Wow, ask them to date you already.” Get it over with. My ears nearly go numb from listening to him daydreaming about them.

“They’re stupid. I don’t want to embarrass myself.”

“Give it a try. You don’t know what will transpire.”

“Well... will you date me?”

“Awwwwwww, goodness. Cough, cough.”

“...”

“Sorry. He choked,” Sand quickly explains, patting Pipo’s back as he coughs. “You okay, bro? Ah... I think I should go first. Gotta talk to Yo about our group assignment. See you at the department. Bye, P’Arc.”

Everything happens so fast. Before I know it, my friends disappear, leaving me in confusion with my peer mentor. My brain slowly processing everything, I can’t keep up with the situation.

“My friends are always like this. Don’t mind them.”

“Sigh.”

“Why did you sigh?”

"You keep asking who my crush is." My heart races at my peer mentor's serious face. I have no clue why I sit still and lock my eyes on the guy before me without blinking. "I'll tell you."

"I'm excited."

"..."

"P'Arc."

Why doesn't he say anything? I'm about to ask him to relieve our nerves, though I'm unsure who's more nervous.

"Are they a freshman?"

"Yes."

"An engineering student?"

"Yeah."

"Do I know them?"

"Very well."

"May I ask if they're a girl or a boy?"

"What do you think?" His eyes are frosty like an icy canal. Chills run all over my body as the unclear answer gradually becomes clearer.

"Are you into boys?"

"I've never liked a boy until this one."

How unexpected. But he's fucking cool! He's disclosing his feelings in front of his peer mentee amid the sound of the pans and the smell of fried meat with basil.

"P'Arc." My voice trails off, my heart shaking as if attacked by a storm. I think I know who that person is. How did I never figure it out?

"Don't tell me..."

"..."

"You like Sand."

Unbelievableeeeeeeeeee.

"I'm full." Arc springs up and turns away, but I seize his wrist.

"Where are you going?"

"To get run over by a car."

"Hey, why are you hurt? You haven't even confessed to him."

"I have. But he's too stupid."

"Sand knew?"

"...!!" Arc glares so hard I'm scared he'll beat me to a pulp.

"Why are you mad?"

"I'm mad at you."

"I'm sorry." Too late. Arc shakes my hand off and strides away with his food. "Come back, P'Arc... Come on, don't be sad. I feel awful."

"..."

"I can comfort you. Tell me what you want."

"Get away from me," I jog after him, uneasy that I might have said something hurtful, feeling like crying for real.

"P'Arc..."

"I don't have a thing for your friend. Not for Sand or Po."

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that." I'm too slow again because the Superior Prince moves at the speed of light. Before I know it, I watch his car soar off into the distance.

I have no idea which part of what I learned today is true and which part isn't. One, Arc likes a boy. Two, I know him. And three... I don't know what I did wrong, But I will carry my thick-skinned face to apologize.

Arm~~ You deserve a slap in the mouth. I shouldn't have said that. I shouldn't have...

I haven't seen Arc for days since the incident.

Our schedules never overlapped. When I hurried to the civil engineering workshop room after classes, he would always leave first. The Superior Prince was rarely found again. Someone might report a missing person.

When I went to the soccer field, Arc would skip practice. My initial worry turned into a hundred-ton rock on my body. I never mentioned the incident to my two best friends, keeping it to myself until I got to talk it out with the Superior Prince. But when...?

I have no courage to go to his apartment, afraid he'll kick me off with no mercy. That would hurt me tremendously.

Rrr...!

My alarm clock goes off like usual. I sit up and rub my eyes for a moment before noticing the guy in front of me smiling at his phone.

"Who are you texting?"

"My darling." I gape.

"Are you dating her now?"

"Not yet, but soon." We're talking about the Nursing Princess.

Their relationship seemingly goes well. Good thing Arc pointed out he wasn't into Sand, or else it would've been more chaotic.

"Let me ask you something. Have you seen P'Arc lately?"

"No," replies Sand immediately, his eyes glued to the phone screen.

I've tried every way to contact Arc, but he disappeared into thin air like he'd never existed. He turned off his phone and stopped being active on Facebook, Instagram or LINE. Everything is unsettlingly frozen.

Knock, knock, knock.

As usual, Pipo knocks on the door and enters the room in the morning. In his pajamas, he darts inside and holds out his phone.

"The Superior Prince is active."

“Shittttttt!” Almost throwing his phone away, my roommate dashes to join Pipo in the middle of the room.

“What? When? Tell us.”

“A week after I’ve been keeping an eye on my idol, I discovered he liked someone’s photo on IG.” Pipo extends his phone, showing a familiar girl’s Instagram account, the legendary one with one hundred and ninety thousand followers. She was also Arc’s buddy.

“See? They took a photo together.”

Arc ignored my texts but like someone’s photo. The Engineer Friendship Festival ended ages ago, yet, surprisingly, these two have kept in touch. BrinkBrink occasionally posted photos of her and Arc together. The strange thing is Arc reacted.

He’s alive and well.

“Good to know he’s not dead. I’ll go take a shower.”

“Yeah. Hurry up. The class starts at eight. We’ll lose attendance points if we’re late. Damn!” My friend complains behind me. I grab my towel and enter the bathroom with this hollowness in my heart. My face in the mirror resembles a sad puppy. Why am I upset?

I should be happy if Arc is happy. Even though we haven’t talked, I suppose he’s not holding a grudge anymore.

“Take a shower. Don’t cry,” one of them shouts from outside.

“Why the fuck would I? Stupid!”

“Are you sad?”

“Why would I be?”

“Arc interacted with someone else but not with you.”

“We just happen to be in the same gear code. I don’t have the right to be sad. Not at all. I shouldn’t...” I turn on the shower head with my right hand and let water wash over me. I could’ve filmed a music video with a sad song.

The atmosphere is gloomy today. Once I arrive at the department building, my mind is occupied with constant worry. In the classroom...

"P'Arc is seeing his buddy from MEU. Daaaaaaaaaamn."

"They're a perfect match."

"I'm jealous of her."

"Come on, BrinkBrink is super cute. I'm jealous of them both," my trashy friend starts this topic. The whole department now knows about their relationship.

"What about you, Arm? Do you know this?" Someone pokes my shoulder, startling me.

"Huh? What? Know what?"

"Are they dating?"

"I don't know."

"Text P'Arc and ask him. I'm curious."

"Okay. I don't know if he'll reply, though." He hasn't read my messages since that day Ugh...the thought saddens me.

Only booze can soothe my heart.

It was terrible in the classroom. However, the cafeteria is worse...

"P'Yeepoon."

"Nong Arm! It's been a while."

"Yeah... well... let me ask you something."

"Go ahead."

"Have you seen P'Arc anywhere?"

"No." Phew~ What a relief. At least I'm not the only one he's been avoiding. "We talked on the phone yesterday. He also went to the bar with P'Jet the other day. What's the matter?"

THUD!

Have you ever fallen from a high place? That's how I feel after hearing Yeepoon's answer.

Even in the restroom...

"Did you see the screenshot? My girlfriend went crazy."

"What screenshot?"

"The Superior Prince is seeing the Engineering Princess from MEU."

"I saw it. They're perfect together. I want to have a girlfriend like her."

"You must be reborn as P'Arc to do that."

"Ugh."

Arc continues to be active on Instagram. He uploaded a photo of the sky with the caption that pierces through my heart.

Arc_anol *I love my girlfriend so much. Don't hit on me. She's quite possessive.*

It would've been better without the girl's reply.

BrinkBrink *I'm blushing.*

I believe their relationship is going well. It's not like I hope to be the first to know about this since I'm not that important to him. Still, it would've been better if all this were just a joke with his friends.

Though it's hardly possible.

Arc lingers in my mind even when I watch a movie...

It reminds me of when he bought me popcorn.

"I saw P'Arc," I cry out after spotting the tall guy's broad back from afar. I march towards him until I reach him.

"P'Arc!"

"Arm, calm down. I'm sorry on behalf of my friend. He's mistaken."

Pipo runs after me and apologizes to that person. I stand in the cinema with my head down, my tickets still not clipped.

"Were your eyes blurry?"

"Yeah."

I never felt like this. Now that he's not here, it feels strangely lonely. I miss Arc.

Even at the meal with the Angel Gear Code after a month, I expect to see my cheeky third-year peer mentor. But...

"Order your food. Get anything you want." Yeepoon is generous as always, though Jet is the one paying.

"This one, please."

"Boiled pork with lime? Anything else?"

"You order it," I say, glancing around.

I hope Arc is in the restroom or something like that and will return to seat beside me like before.

"What are you looking for, nong Arm?" Jet notices. Unable to hide my feelings, I admit it.

"Where's P'Arc?"

"Oh, he's not coming."

"Is he busy?"

"He didn't say. I'm used to him not showing up. Don't mind it."

"I can't contact him," my voice trails off, earning the stares from the couple opposite to me.

"He hardly picks up calls."

"P'Yeepoon said she talked to him on the phone the other day. You also had drinks with him, P'Jet," I say, pouting. I awfully hate myself for being like this, but I can't put on a playful expression anymore.

"We bumped into each other at the bar."

"Why did I never?"

"Arm."

"I want to see P'Arc. Do you have Mr. Rungson's number?"

"No. Pull yourself together. Don't bother his dad and escalate this matter."

I get nothing but a meek smile. I can't even contact Mr. Rungson, and his son is nowhere to be seen. What am I supposed to do?

Instagram is on fire!

Brink posted another photo with Arc and it became the talk of the town. The photo was taken long ago, but I'm still jealous because Arc didn't just like it but also replied.

BrinkBrink *The Engineer Friendship Festival: The beginning of a beautiful relationship.*

Who wouldn't grasp that?!

The caption will make anyone grit their teeth as it's obvious they're a thing!

Arc_anol: *I look terrible in this photo*

BrinkBrink: *@Arc_anol you're handsome. Do you even have bad angles?*

Arc_anol: *@BrinkBrink I do when I'm with you.*

BrinkBrink: *@Arc_anol Ugggggggh, I'm hurt.*

I'm itching to respond but hold back since it would be out of place. I just like those comments like hundreds of people.

Reading their conversations that took place a few minutes ago, I attempt to go to the saved number and press 'call'.

The number is unavailable.

Maybe Arc blocked me.

Arc sent his friends to tell me multiple times to not come to the soccer field, yet I insisted. Today is the last practice day before a long break due to the midterm exam and the postponement of Sports Day.

"Nong Arm, you came here again?"

"Yeah."

I'm not here empty-handed, bringing water, energy drinks, refreshing towels, and bandages.

My regular spot is the seat on the sideline. I watch the seniors play soccer, soaked in sweat, with no sign of the you-know-who.

"Give me water." Bloom runs from the middle of the field and stretches his hand once he reaches me.

"Ah, I bought this for P'Arc. Yours is..."

"My friend isn't coming."

"Why? Is he avoiding me?"

"I don't know. Talk to him."

"How am I supposed to do that when he refuses to see me?"

"I'll tell him."

"Really?" I smile instantly.

"Yeah. I feel bad for a sad puppy."

"I'm not a puppy."

"Close enough. Will you give me that water?" I quickly hand it over.

The seniors practice for nearly three hours before splitting up. I also leave. Thankfully during Arc's absence, I have dozens of his photos on my phone to console myself. I always look at them when I think of him.

I don't know what this feeling is but I know one thing...

Arc is so important to me.

The midterm exam is around the corner. The study sessions started a few days ago.

Each day, my dorm mates and I would send one of us to reserve a place to study, be it a café or the library, and then we'd be there almost all day.

No one is up today. We're knocked out in bed and wake up when the alarm clock goes off in the evening to have dinner and head to the library packed with students.

Guy has found a free table in the library, so everyone is happy to avoid searching for hours for an empty place. Our lecture notebooks, stationery, materials, physics books, and iPads are scattered over the table. We're absorbed in reviewing the lessons at ten.

Around midnight, some of us either go to the bathroom or flirt with the girls at the other tables. Some of us lose patience and leave to play games before returning two hours later. But not me. I concentrate on studying until my energy runs out.

Three in the morning...

I'm really sleepy.

"You can barely open your eyes, Arm. Write your will before dying," says Sand. Agreeing, I wave my hand and rest my head on the table to nap for fifteen minutes. Who would've thought an hour would pass so fast, seeing the time on my phone screen? I'm also leaning on someone's shoulder.

"Mmmmm." I'm dizzy. My vision is blurry so I raise my hand to rub my eyes, but someone grasps my wrist.

"Don't rub your eyes. They'll be red."

This voice...

This familiar low voice I haven't heard in a while. I gaze up, blink repeatedly, and realize this person is no one else but my third-year peer mentor, whom I've wished to see for so long. The realization brings me to tears.

"Arm."

"Waaaaaaah." Shit. I hate myself for burying my face in his chest and bursting out crying.

"What a crybaby."

"You ditched me. You ditched me. You ditched me!"

"You were naughty."

"I wasn't. You ditched me," I repeat. Arc hugs me and rocks my body back and forth. His black tee is wet with tears, but I won't stop. I actually can't stop crying.

“Aren’t you embarrassed?”

“No. Where have you been? You blocked my number and wouldn’t reply to my texts, but you interacted with other people.” I’ve been drowned in this inexplicable feeling. I’m so fucking hurt.

Arc cups my face in his large hands and locks our eyes. He wipes my tears off with his thumbs, his curved lips curling up.

“You’re such a demanding brat.”

“You’re also the worst person ever.” I free my face from his hands and look around to find no one else is here. Seeing my friends’ things gone, I realize they left me in the middle of the night. I’m not mad at them because I’m angrier at the guy next to me.

“Go back to your dorm. It’s cold here.”

“I know.” I pack up with the help of the guy beside me. A moment later, Arc takes care of everything for me and even flings my backpack on his shoulder.

“I’ll give you a ride.”

“No, thanks. I came here with my friends.”

“They left.”

“I’ll walk.”

“How stubborn.. Are you going to walk out of the library at three in the morning?”

“I...I’ll call a friend.”

“Stubborn brat. I’ll give you a ride.” Robbing me of a chance to argue, Arc seizes my wrist and leads me out. Tears flow out of my eyes like a broken dam. I keep my head down, unable to control my emotions. Arc ushers me to the door without a sign of annoyance.

Once in the car, I wipe my face roughly with my sleeves. Arc tosses my backpack to the backseat and adjusts my seat to a more comfortable position.

“Quit crying.”

“I’m yawning.”

"You've been yawning for some time. Are you upset I never replied to your texts?"

"Who? Who's upset? Bullshit."

"Don't call me tomorrow, then."

"Why not?"

"Why would you?"

I bite my lip and watch Arc start the engine. He focuses on the road, ignoring me. There are heaps of things in my mind that I wish to say, but I'm too stupid to organize those words. I stay silent, fixing my eyes on the unfamiliar road.

"Where are we going?"

"My apartment," Arc answers lazily without a glance at me.

"No. I want to go to my dorm."

"They closed the gate."

"It's open 24/7. You know nothing."

"Somebody definitely knows nothing."

"I know more than you. I know who you're dating. Wow... it must be fun to date a famous girl. I have bad angles when I'm with you. You meant her cuteness overshadowed your charm, huh?"

"Nonsense."

"I was snooping. You guys are perfect for each other."

"Thanks for your encouragement," Arc accepts, not denying it.

"So you're dating her?"

"No."

"What about your crush?"

"Never mind. It's not important."

"How could you change your mind so fast?"

"Sometimes I just can't wait for someone to be smart."

“He’ll be hurt.”

“It hurts me more.”

“It hurts me, too,” I say, for some reason. It’s not that bad, compared to when he was absent.

Arc turns to me and asks a question in puzzlement. “Why?”

“You avoided me.”

“Ugh!”

“It hurts that you ignored my calls. It hurts that you drank with P’Jet without telling me. It hurts that you wouldn’t reply to my texts but interact with someone else.”

“ .. ”

“And I hate myself for having these awful thoughts when I’m just your peer mentee.”

“Arm.”

“Don’t tell me off yet. There’s much more than this if I know how I feel.”

“How do you feel?”

“I’m fucking jealous.”

I get to learn Arc is a terrible driver. We nearly swerve off the road...

I bury my face in the pillow, unable to face the apartment owner, who stands beside the bed with his arms crossed and tries to drag me out of bed to shower and get ready for school.

I have a study session with the guys, but so what? I’m not ready.

I can’t face the Superior Prince after he’s discovered his peer mentee somehow developed feelings for him. He’s seeing someone else, and their relationship is going well.

“Get up.”

“No!”

“Stop being stubborn. I’ll be studying with my friends later.”

“You can go first. I’ll lock the door.”

“You think this is funny?”

I cover myself with the blanket. Losing his patience, Arc yanks it off, carries me on his shoulder and strides to the restroom. I bet he would throw me into a trash bin if he could.

Half an hour later, I sit in front of the vanity like a doll as the Superior Prince blow-dries my hair.

“Look up.”

“I can’t look at you.”

“You were always a fighter. Why are you a loser now?”

“I feel really guilty towards you. I’m sorry.”

Arc sighs, not uttering a word.

We have a simple meal late in the morning. I still can’t look him in the eye and just let him drag me around. Eventually, we arrive at the café where his friends are.

“A brat is studying with us today,” says Arc, sitting on the other side of the table and pulling me into the chair beside him.

“Damn, why does he look so glum?”

“I scolded him. Naughty brat.”

“I’m not naughty.” I mumble and greet Arc’s friends.

“Hey, Arm.”

They open their books to review lessons. Shortly after, Pond asks a question. I listen attentively since it’s about Arc.

“Arc, let’s go to the bar tonight.”

“Why?”

“Are you for real? There’s a soccer match tonight.”

“Oh.”

“Will you go or not? I’ll reserve a table.”

“Let me ask Arm.”

“What does it have to do with me?” I’m trying to be as quiet as possible. Why is he involving me?

“I’ll ask you because I’ll take you if you want to go.”

“Let me ask the guys first. Sand, Pipo, Yo, and the other dorm mates.”

“You’re sure sociable.”

“Of course.”

“And very jealous.”

Fuck...

“I’m sorry, okay?” I didn’t mean it.” I wish he would forget it. I was just upset from being avoided and nothing else. I don’t want Arc to feel uncomfortable around his peer mentee.

“Arm should come. It’s Arsenal vs. Liverpool. Which team are you rooting for?” Copp cuts in with a smile after letting me and Arc bicker for some time. I know he’ll root for the opponent of my team. Right, I’m bad luck.

“I’m loyal to my team.”

“What about the score?”

“22 to 1.”

“Idiot, you’re exaggerating again. I’ll wait and see.”

“Sure.”

“Have you not learned? You always lose when you exaggerate,” says Arc. Having no comeback, I drop my eyes to my notes, though I can barely process each paragraph.

Time moves fucking slowly. I’ve stayed in the café for hours. Although no one makes me uncomfortable, I can’t face the Superior Prince. I occasionally flee to the restroom or chat with my friends on the phone. Eventually, I mention the bar tonight. It’s almost the midterm exam, yet these guys are hyped up for a soccer match.

My dorm mates never say no, getting more excited since the invitation is from Arc. I’d rather lie down in my room but I somehow end up at the bar.

“Arsenal, Arsenal, Arsenal!”

“Is P’Arc here?”

“No. He left us and his juniors waiting.”

The booze is served at our table, including ice buckets and food. We’re ready for the game tonight.

The third-year guys had reserved the table and arrived half an hour before my friends and I caught up with them. It’s this late, yet Arc is nowhere to be seen.

“Copp, call him. Did he die somewhere?”

“No need. He’s over there.” The Superior Prince enters the bar, earning a holler due to his new fashion.

Many burst out laughing. Some of his friends are so surprised that they record him on their phones.

Damn. Arc is wearing a Liverpool shirt.

This is an ultimately rare occasion.

“Whoooooooooa, what the hell?”

“Do we have a new fan of Liverpool? Gotta give it to him.” My peer mentor must be possessed to wear the opponent’s shirt.

“Arc has changed, or did someone change you? Wooooooooo!”

“I haven’t done my laundry. This is my only option.”

“That’s just an excuse. I remember you never had this shirt in your closet. Quit lying.”

“Shut up. I have shirts of every team,” Arc replies with a deadpan face before blatantly pulling a chair between me and his friend sitting down.

“You’re late. Sit somewhere else.”

“I sit wherever I want to.”

“Arm, switch to that seat. It’s packed here,” Copp asks. I nod obediently, but Arc snaps back, not allowing it.

“Copp, you move.”

“Fuck, I’m your friend.”

“This is Arm.”

“What the hell? Are you that protective of your peer mentor now?”

“I have nothing to do with this. I’m here for the game,” I interrupt them to prevent getting dragged into the fight.

The alcohol gradually increases in my system. I can’t drink much because my peer mentor disallows it, so I just sip on the booze while watching the game.

I scream at the top of my lungs when my team scores in half an hour.

“Whoaaaaa, amazing!”

“Ugh, what the heck?”

“I’m begging you, as a soccer fan, don’t upload your statuses about Arsenal. Please don’t. I won’t be able to like all of them. Hahaha.”

“I’ll kick your ass, Arm.”

“How scary. I’m so scared.”

Who would have thought the curse would be real? Arsenal scored ten minutes after I bragged.

“Wooooooo, what? They caught up now. Your happiness was short-lived.”

“I’m confused.”

My bad luck works continuously and intensifies because after that, Arsenal scores goal after goal. The net nearly rips. In the blink of an eye, they’re in the lead by three to one.

“Are you going to cry?” Arc whispers. I shake my head.

I still have hope, but... Liverpool loses at the end. I can’t fucking believe it. My 22 to 1 prediction is obliterated.

They mock me over and over again. Arc is also caught in the crossfire because he wears a Liverpool shirt without a care. Damn, we lost.

"P'Arc, I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"I'm bad luck."

"You're looking at me now?" he asks. I automatically drop my gaze.

"Well..."

"I'll be right back." Arc disappears into the back of the bar, not waiting for me to finish.

Even when the others get ready to leave, Arc is still not back. Anon with no debt has no choice but to squeeze through the soccer fans to look for his peer mentor. I spot him smoking in a short distance. I've never seen him smoke, so this is quite a surprise.

"P'Arc." His eyes are half-closed. I didn't notice how much he drank, but the reek of alcohol tells all.

"Hmm?"

"I'm leaving with my friends."

"Mm"

"Are you okay?" He doesn't look okay.

"Yeah?"

"Are you drunk? Can you drive home?"

"Will you drive me or what?"

"As if. You should ask your friend for a ride."

"You don't want to be near me, huh? You wouldn't even look at me." How dramatic. Hey! He's never gotten emotional when drunk before. He would usually drive me up the wall.

"It's not like that."

"Then why wouldn't you look at me?" Arc drops his cigarette onto the ground. The tall guy grinds it with his foot until the smoke fades before gripping both my shoulders.

"I...I'm looking at you now. I just feel terrible for saying something I shouldn't have." Arc is forcing me to do what I shouldn't. "You have a crush on someone and might even be dating many more people."

"Why would you think that?"

"You're dating her. I saw it on IG. But all this time, since a while ago... I've been telling myself not to feel anything. When you practiced your confession and treated me nicely, you were giving me hope even though it meant nothing."

"Why do you think it was nothing? What an idiot."

"I'm not an idiot."

"And you're naughty."

"I'm not."

"You're always talking back. If you argue again, I won't be kind anymore."

"You've never been kind to me."

"Have you known anything all this time? Do you know who I like?" Arc asks in all seriousness, yet I insist on what I've witnessed.

"You like a lot of people. You like your buddy."

"I don't. It was my friend, and Brink played along." His answer takes me aback for a second, then I fight back.

"There's another one. You've had a crush on him for a long time. You said he's stupid."

"Right."

"He's a first-year engineering student that I know. How am I supposed to face you with these feelings?"

"Arm..." Arc's voice audibly softens.

"..."

"If you keep being stupid, I'll deal with you for real this time."

"Well, I'm stupid."

Arc pushes me against the wall, buries his face in my neck, and heaves a sigh. He stays like that for some time before whispering something for only us to hear.

"I'm tired, Arm. You still have no idea when I'm flirting with you like this."

"W...What?"

"I'm hitting on you. When will you figure it out?"

Hottie and Cutie Volume II

Chapter 13

Patience Test (for the Heart)

It's hard to believe what I've just heard.

It's hard to comprehend, as I've never imagined things would come this far.

Despite my inability to understand this, Arc somehow has brought me to his apartment. My trashy friends definitely love me, pushing me to the Superior Prince, their idol, like an offering to a monk.

Visiting my third-year peer mentor's apartment is supposed to feel no different, yet it does. I can't force myself to feel that way after getting shot by a Cupid's arrow. My heart is now... a hot mess.

"Why are you looking at me?" says the low voice, startling me.

"I...I should ask you. Why are you looking at me?"

"Can't I?"

"No." I wrap the blanket around me more tightly sitting stupidly in bed.

"Naughty brat." Arc mutters, sighing. With no sign of anger, he continues to do something that flusters me.

"W...Why are you taking off your shirt?"

"To shower."

"Do it in the bathroom."

"This is my place. I can do whatever I want."

"Yeah. Do whatever you want!" I thought Mr. Anol would be considerate of me, but no.

He goes even harder. Nooooooooo.

Besides the shirt, Arc removes his pants and walks around in his underwear in the cool air from the air-conditioner. The tall guy spins, collects things for some time, and heads into the bathroom. I hold my breath, wait until I hear the water running, and I inhale again.

What should I do? I have no idea what to do but listen intently to the man inside the bathroom.

Time passes...

"Go take a shower." I'm startled again. The spasm may land me in the emergency room.

"I have no clothes."

"Everything is in my closet. Choose whatever you want," says Arc in a deadpan face before getting dressed. He has a fucking great shape. I wish I was tall like that...

"If you don't move, I'll strip you and drag you into the bathroom for a scrub."

How scaryyyyyyyyy.

I leap out of bed, grab a towel and my peer mentor's clothes, and dart into the bathroom.

My head is overwhelmed by confusion, my hands sweating. Not from fear but from excitement of the situation.

I'm not the type to build walls around my heart, resist love like teenagers, or maintain my singleness or private life. I've just never had a chance to be in a serious relationship, and I've always hoped to date someone nice to warm my heart and fulfill my youth like others. It's still never happened because I've never stumbled across someone who gets along with me.

As for Arc, he's my peer mentor.

I was going to hit on Yeepoon first, but Jet would've killed me. Still, it was just a shallow thought of a normal human meeting someone cute and feeling exhilarated. However, I never thought of Arc in that way.

Arc is basically an alien. Aside from being the Superior Prince, he's obnoxious. When we first met, it felt like he didn't like me all that much. I have no clue when things changed.

Arc began to be nice to me. He treated me to meals, took me to movies, and cared about me like the others in our gear code. I admit I was foolish to never notice those signs until lately when he treated me well. Sometimes he even expressed his affection out of the blue. My heart fluttered, yet I didn't dare to read too much into it.

He once said he had a crush on someone, which only reminded me that we were just in the same gear code and also both men. Arc's type in my mind is too far-fetched for my nearly smooth brain to imagine. Look at me...

With this height.

With this appearance.

A pain in the neck and an idiot.

Did he use his toes to think? It feels unlikely no matter how I look at it.

Knock, knock, knock.

The knocks on the bathroom door snap me out of my train of thought. I turn off the showerhead and shout out in puzzlement.

"What is it?"

"You're taking too long. Come out. Who told you to sleep in there?"

"I'm not sleeping. You know I take long showers." As if. My mind was occupied by you.

"If you don't come out in five minutes, I'll unlock the door." Daaaaaaamn, he has the key. I must hurry. I've been acting like this is a music video and I drowned in confusion and nothing was done. I quickly pour shower cream over myself.

Arc never jokes, a man of his word. I won't risk getting kicked in the ass by his feet.

CLICK!

Once done, I open the door to face the tall guy nervously. My heart flutters. It's not like I'm insensitive. I meet the gaze of the guy waiting in front of the vanity and my heart pounds like crazy.

"Sit here," says Arc. I walk over like a programmed robot, not arguing.

"What are you going to do?"

"Your hair is wet. It'll be damp when you sleep. Will you take responsibility for my wet pillow?"

"A wet pillow isn't a pregnant girl. Why would I take responsibility for that?" I shoot. Arc knocks my head gently and pushes my shoulders down over the seat.

"Keep barking."

"I will."

"Did you use the shower cream on your head?"

"How do you know?"

"I can smell it."

"You have a good sense of smell like a dog."

"Do you want to get bitten by a dog?"

"Nooooo."

"Are you wearing underwear out here?" Ugggggggggh, don't mind my crotch. My heart is already a mess.

"Yes."

"Which one? Does my size fit?"

"I'm wearing the old one," I say, glancing up at the guy hovering over me. Seeing him staring, I resume "Plus, I only wear size XL."

"XL or XS?"

"You're underestimating me."

"I'm not wrong."

"Why do you care about my size?"

"Who cares? I'm just asking about underwear. What are you thinking?" I'm itching to spin around and kick his chest, but he's bigger than me. Doubting I'll ever beat him, I keep that thought inside and reply in a plain voice.

"You're an unforgivable pain in the ass."

The war ceases, replaced by a silence that is soon broken by the sound of the hair dryer.

Arc touches my hair with his large hand, rubs it, and blow-dries it with medium heat to low. The guy in the mirror right now isn't someone I know. He looks gentle and caring. I sometimes wonder if he treats everyone nicely like this.

A few moments later, my calm mind gets worked up again.

I have so many questions kept inside because I have no courage to voice them.

"Just ask." Daaaaaamn, it's like he was reading my mind. What should I do? Should I say it or not? If not... it will keep bugging me, and I will lose sleep, become fidgety, get athlete's foot, have fingers and toes itch, get crotch itch, and develop ringworm.

Therefore I should ask and get it over with.

"Are you really into boys?"

"Yeah," Arc answers immediately, in a whisper. I have to listen carefully amid the sound of the hair dryer.

"How come?"

"Because I like you."

Shit... Cupid shoots another arrow.

"Why... Do you like me? Do you really? There's nothing good about me." Despite how much I fool myself about how good looking I am, I don't think I'm that handsome. Arm Anon is super average.

"I'm used to how there's nothing good about you."

Ouch! It hurts like I get stabbed in the heart. Is that an insult?

“Can’t you give me a better answer?”

“I saw your butt and got horny.”

“Fuck off.” I fight the urge to snatch the hair dryer and smack his face with it for messing with me. “How’s that a good thing?”

“Arm, stop being stupid.”

“That’s hard. I can stop being smart, though.”

“You did that a while ago.”

“Bullshit.”

“This is why I like you.” That shuts me up. Arc continues drying my hair without looking up like earlier. “You don’t need to always fall for smart people.”

“...”

“Someone who is sometimes smart and sometimes stupid that tries to learn and understand things they’re stupid about is more interesting.”

“I’m not the only person like that.”

“Yeah, but no one is like you.”

“How am I better than others?”

“No. You’re fucking worse.”

Fuck!

“Do you remember that day?” asks Arc.

“No,” I reply, not wanting for him to elaborate just to ease the building uneasiness in my heart.

“I’ll deal with you if you mess with me again.”

“Okay, okay. I want no trouble. What happened that day?”

“We were in my car that day. I got hot-headed and hit the other car’s trunk.”

“Whoaaa, I remember it well. I almost died, but it was satisfying to see P’Jet scolding you. Served you right.”

“It was the first time I cared about someone in a way I’d never done. I started to drive slower and be more patient on the road to keep the person beside me safe. Maybe it was that feeling. I wanted to protect and take care of you. And as time went by, you grew more important to me.”

“I never knew that, but my heart felt warm when you were nice to me, though it wasn’t clear what it was.”

When Arc disappeared my heart felt hollow. When I discovered his interactions with someone else, I was on the verge of tears. A mix of upsetness and jealousy. Of course, those feelings were temporary. When I thought about it, those feelings might not have been seeded by love but by a bromance as he is my peer mentor.

“You’ll get it someday.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

“What should I do to understand it?”

“Have sex with me.”

“Bastard.”

“It’ll be fun. I guarantee.”

“I’m unwilling to be aware of your perverted side.”

“You might like it.”

“Don’t joke with me.”

“Take your time to think of the answer. No rush. Try to understand it slowly.”

“What about you? How did you feel before you realized you were into me?”

“Do I have to tell you that?”

“Yes.”

Arc turns off the hair dryer and puts it in the drawer. I look up and meet eyes with the guy behind me, who remains emotionless. We stay quiet. Certain I'll receive no answer, I shift to rise, but he speaks first.

"Sometimes there's no specific reason to like someone. But at that time, when you were talking to Tongfah, I felt something."

"..."

"We're no different."

"..."

"I was jealous, seriously."

I stay over at Arc's place for the night and he gives me a ride to the dormitory in the morning. I've survived the night unscathed since my peer mentor didn't bite me in his sleep like before. He even left a large gap between us and never touched me once until dawn.

I'm slightly smarter now after Arc ran out of patience and confessed. I was stunned. It would be too fast to open my heart and accept everything, so I need time to reflect on my feelings.

"How was last night?"

A sudden question.

Pipo and Sand are fully dressed, sitting on the edge of the bed with their extremely nosy faces.

The midterm exam is around the corner, indeed, yet the classes remain as usual. We'll be granted some days off to review the lessons a few days before the exam, so we have no choice but to wake up, shower and dress up for school.

"Nothing much," I say, closing the door. I trudge toward them and squeeze next to Pipo until he moves to my roommate's other side.

"The light in the bar was dim. What was the score last night?"

"Fuck you." They're messing with me.

"The team's hope is on you."

"Yeah. Whatever."

"You broke the record. Losing every freaking time. What a poor life you're leading."

"I'm unlucky because you guys are my friends."

"But I fucking love you. You'll never walk alone."

For fuck's sake, Arc even got mocked because of me. I feel bad.

"So what if Liverpool lost? At least they got several trophies in the past."

"Yeah, yeah. Stuck in the past."

"..."

"Don't be upseeet, I'm done teasing you about soccer. Let me ask you about last night.

Did you and P'Arc fight?" Pipo and Sand take turns asking questions harmoniously. Unsure what will come next, I stay vague.

"No."

"You took quite a long time to bring him back inside, and he even demanded to take you home with him after he was back, I can't help but wonder why..."

"Why didn't you stop him? You just let me go with him."

"Why would I? What P'Arc wants, P'Arc gets." They never treat me, their friend, this well.

"You also let him hold your hand and lead you out in a daze, so I didn't ask."

"Yeah. Just forget it."

"Quit dodging my questions. Did anything happen?"

"No. Arc was smoking and I went out to bring him back inside. That was all."

"Good. You're his peer mentee, after all." I nod and turn around to pack my backpack and prepare a presentation file for the class today. My trashy friends chat enjoyably.

"Oh, Sand, did you know?"

"Know what?"

“About P’Arc and the pretty P’Brink. The caption is gone. All deleted except for the photo.”

“Ooooooh, how come?”

“P’Bloom and the guys were drunk and told me everything last night. In conclusion, Copp posted it on the Superior Prince’s phone, then the Engineering Princess saw it and played along for fun. It’s not fun for the nosy folks, though. I guess they all know now that there’s nothing between them.”

“Good. I also overheard his friends saying he already has a crush on someone.”

THUD!

I drop my book onto the floor as I eavesdrop on them, making those two stare at me.

“What’s wrong, Arm?”

“Nothing. I just dropped my book.”

“Pick it up, then.” They continue chatting. Daaaamn, I take so much time packing that it gets annoying.

“What kind of person do you think P’Arc likes?”

“Me, of course.”

BAM!

Pipo gets smacked on the head by Sand, one of our gang.

“P’Arc wouldn’t like you.”

“I’m cute and innocent. The Superior Prince might have a peculiar taste.”

“I doubt it. I bet he likes someone pretty. If P’Brink is a no, perhaps his type is Victoria’s Secret models.”

“Wow! I agree.”

“Who could it be?”

“Sooooo many people. Maybe P’Jitti, the campus princess?”

"No way. That girl is out of the question. I don't think P'Arc likes her. I think it must be this person," I listen to every single word. I stand still, stop moving my hands, and press my lips together by instinct, waiting... until they speak.

But nobody speaks. I can't help but turn around.

Their smiles send shivers all over me. Pipo and Sand stare at me without a word to the point I get flustered.

"What?"

"Are you eavesdropping?"

"I...I'm curious. P'Arc is my peer mentor."

"Well, we think he has a crush on a first-year student."

"Wow, he likes someone younger, huh?"

"Yeah. Someone in our department."

"Shocking." My eyes pop out dramatically to conceal this strange uneasiness in my mind.

"Here's the crazy part!"

"What is it?"

"I have no idea who it is."

That's it. I got worked up for nothing.

I exhale a sigh of relief. It's not like I wish to hide it, but I'm still not confident about my feelings. I still can't even fully believe Arc. I mean... It's unbelievable.

"Hey."

"What?"

"Do you think P'Arc is capable of loving someone?"

"No," replies Pipo. Sand chimes in.

"You think so?" I waver.

"Think about it. A hot person like him can choose anyone. Be it lovely or cute people.

From what I've heard, his ex works in showbiz."

“Whoa... young actors are freaking cute. I wonder why they broke up.”

“It’s something along the lines of the Superior Prince was too private and didn’t want to date anyone, so they broke up.”

“Just like that?”

“Check his IG account. It was loooooong ago. Back in high school. The girl tagged him in a photo that hasn’t been deleted. She’s dating someone right now, though. For ages.”

“I must look into this.” This matter becomes a new topic for these nosy guys. Not ruining the fun, I grasp all the keywords and find some free time after studying to snoop on Arc’s instagram account quietly.

Oh! I found it.

A famous young actress, sought-after and super pretty.

P’Kao, who started in the Ho-Mok series **(Ho-Mok is steamed fish with curry paste wrapped in banana leaves)*

The photo has no caption. Still, judging by their poses, they were certainly more than friends.

How upsetting...

I wish to ask myself. The answer is becoming clearer, about how important Arc is to me. I wouldn’t have been this furious otherwise.

I scroll for more photos and find nothing. Only one is left. I keep reading the comments and looking at the same photo over and over.

Karma works fast for a nosy person since I accidentally like the photo. Damn you, Arm. I rapidly unlike it and pray no one has noticed. The photo got tons of likes and my mistake was very brief. But...

Rrrr...!

My phone rings, bringing my misfortune.

IT IS ARC.

I can't ignore it, or it'll be suspicious. Perhaps he's calling to talk about something else, not this, as I fear.

"Heeeeeeeey," I say with chills running down my spine.

[What did you do?]

"What? What did you say? The signal is bad."

[Are you fucking messing with me? Why did you like that photo?]

"You were on IG? How did you know?"

[I know everything you do.]

"It was nothing. I just... scrolled and... and..." It sucks to be born dumb. I can't even save myself in a deadly situation.

[And?]

"Hey, I'm sorry." I have no excuse.

[For what?]

"I was nosy."

[You always are.] Unable to argue, I stay quiet and wait for the ticking bomb to explode on its own. Arc tells me off all the time. I'd better get used to it.

[That photo was taken years back. We broke up a long time ago. She has a boyfriend right now, and I don't have feelings for her anymore.]

"I didn't ask."

[Didn't you want to know?]

"No."

[I'll tell her to delete the photo.]

"Don't. I didn't want you to do that. I accidentally liked it because... I was nosy. I wanted to see who your ex is and see how I am."

[What do you think?]

"I can't beat her," She's so pretty and famous that everyone must accept it.

[Why would you want to beat her? You can't even beat yourself.] This asshole...

"It's unbelievable that you like me."

[True. I didn't expect to care this much about you either. I've told you so many times that I'm about to go nuts.]

Another attack. Where did Arc learn this? He's terrifyingly clear.

"Hey, am I that stupid?"

[Yeah. But not as much as me.]

"..."

[I was hitting on you, but you had no idea. What an idiot I am.]

"I'm more stupid."

[We both are. That's why we suit each other. Rest assured. No one in this world is as stupid as us.]

At that moment, I'm unsure if I should be happy or sad about being called stupid.

A hellish week before the exam, I don't get to see any of my peer mentors. I only see my engineering gang every day for study sessions.

"Give me your student card."

"Here it is. I'll be right back. Let me get something to drink."

"Hurry up. Hey, your student card. Will you study or not, you son of a bitch?"

"If the rest of you have nothing to do, stay here. I'll go book a study room."

I hear Guy's voice constantly as he organizes everything for us useless pieces of crap. We're in front of the library, handing over our student cards to book a study room.

We'll be reviewing multiple subjects today. The ones who excel in each subject are all present. However, it's difficult to gather everyone in a short time. We've agreed to meet up at 15h, and yet some showed up at 16h. In the end, we got to start at 18h. We're likely to get Fs.

As expected...

"Calculus I, tutored by Pock. A round of applause."

Clap, clap, clap.

The study session goes more smoothly this way. We usually review easy subjects separately, but some with calculations are sometimes too complicated to study alone. That's why the dorm mates prefer to gather everyone to help each other out during tough times.

There are brilliant electrical engineering students, but only a few.

The rest of us here never aim for As, simply wishing for no Fs.

"Let's start on the first problem." The friend at the front writes on the whiteboard. Each of us is fully focused, studying nonstop, continuing to the next subject after the first without breaking the flow.

We take a break at eight to have dinner before resuming the session at after nine. I wonder where these guys gained their straight to never grumble once like before. It hypes me up.

We take another break at midnight.

"Is that P'Arc? Awwwwwwwww, my idol is here."

One of the guys screams crazily, drawing everyone's eyes to the glass door. The tall guy stands with his friends, seemingly about to leave.

"Should we call him?"

"Don't," I said in a weak voice, though we haven't seen each other for five days.

I don't want to disturb him, in case he's busy or concentrating on studying. The sight of him puts me at ease, nonetheless. He looks fine.

"Why, Arm? We must greet our idol," says Yo before he opens the door to say hello to those third-year students.

"Guys, how are you doing?"

"Oh, freshmen. Are you studying hard?" asks Pond.

"Yeah. Are you guys leaving?"

"Yeah."

"I won't bother you anymore. I came out just to greet you guys."

"Is Arm here?" cuts in the familiar low voice. I sit still but my heart drums like a marching band.

"Yes, he's right there. You can come in," Everyone points at me. The door is opened wider revealing the you-know-who.

Arc wears a black tee with 'En(d)-Me-Here' printed on it and jeans with the Hello Kitty bag I hate like crazy and a pair of old, torn black sneakers. Despite his wealth, his fashion is miserable.

"P'Arc, you're freaking cool," one of my idiotic friends compliments him.

"Yeah."

"Arc, we're leaving. See you tomorrow."

"Yeah." The third-year guys briefly say goodbye to each other and split, leaving the Superior Prince in the middle of the room. He stares at me, but I glue my eyes to the lecture notes and highlighters on the table, unable to meet his gaze.

"I'm not sleepy yet. Do you guys want anything to eat? I'll go get it."

"Awwwwwww, P'Arc, it's all right. Who would dare to make you do that?"

"Hey, it's fine, really. Write it down."

"I'm moved and on the verge of your tears by your kindness, I want to express my gratitude by kneeling at your feet." These guys are as dramatic as ever.

They write down a few things each and even volunteer to help, but Arc refuses. Well, I wouldn't get in the way of a guy doing good deeds.

"Arm, what do you want?" asks the fierce guy in an even voice.

"I'll have... an energy drink."

"What if there's none?"

"There must be one."

"What if there's none?"

"A coffee from the convenience store. I could use some caffeine."

"Anything else?"

"No."

"Have you eaten?"

"Yes."

"Okay. I'll be right back."

Arc is gone for almost twenty minutes. My friends are completely distracted, waiting for their fierce idol's return. The time has finally come as my peer mentor is back with heaps of bags.

"P'Arc, let me help you. Let meeee." Everyone swarms around the tall guy like hungry spirits. The room is chaotic for a while before quietening.

"Any chair left?"

"Yes Superior Prince. Wait a sec." One of the guys runs out of the room and comes back with a chair for Arc.

Seriously, why is he dragging the chair to the corner next to me when there's so much room here?

"Where's my energy drink?" I demand. After the guys took their requested stuff nothing was left. I'm going to cry.

"There was none."

"My coffee?"

"None."

"Why are my friends drinking coffee?"

"None for you. Take this." Arc hands me a box of milk. My dream is crushed.

"It doesn't help energize me," I explain.

"Sleep if you're sleepy."

"The midterm is in two days. I wouldn't be able to catch up."

"Why didn't you study prior to this? You had so much time."

"Have you ever heard of 'one-night miracle'?"

"No." Fuck. He's not playing along. His appearance doesn't help with anything since he just messes with me. Am I annoyed? I wish to say yes, but it's not how I feel.

"I'm done arguing with you."

"Go on and study. I avoided you for days out of pity."

"Why?"

"I can barely hold back when I see your face."

"..."

"It turns me on."

Hold your freaking horses. Arc is the ultimate pervert. You piece of shit. Damn you.

"Okay. I'm wide awake now. The milk is refreshing." Let me solve these problems. I hope Arc leaves me alone. But after two problems tutored by my friends, I can't keep up. I hate mechanics.

"Focus," whispers the low voice. My friends concentrate on the lesson on the whiteboard.

"You're distracting me."

"How can you blame me for your stupidity?" Arc jeers. Seeing me being quiet and realizing I'm indeed stupid, he leans closer. I instantly hold my breath.

"Wrong evaluation. Look carefully."

"It's not this one? Like..." I recheck it. "Right."

"You can't even evaluate correctly. An F is waiting for you."

"Don't say that. I'm already worried. If I get an F in my first year, my dad will cut down my allowance." I haven't even paid the debt I owe Arc.

"Take my money if your dad does that."

"Acting like a sugar daddy again. Will you buy me an Audi?"

"I have to consult Mr. Aniruj first."

"You mentioned my dad? I'll tell Mr. Rungson."

"Ha! As if I'll be scared."

"We'll seeeeeeee."

"All right. Bring It on."

"You understand this problem now, right?" Our war is ceased by the friend at the front.

Upon our silence, he continues, "Let's move on to the thirteenth problem."

Wow, my gang is pacing fast. I'm stuck at the eleventh one because I've been busy bickering with Arc. Poor me.

Three in the morning is the most frightening time. Not because the ghosts are out haunting people but because all of us can't force ourselves to stay awake anymore. Damn, we've been studying from last evening until this early in the morning. Once the last problem is reviewed, we quickly pack up.

"Thank you to you all for this session. Thank you P'Arc as well, for accompanying us and teaching us how to solve the hard problems."

"Yeah. You're welcome." Arc stands up, swings the Hello Kitty bag on his shoulder and asks me, "How are you going back to the dorm?"

"I drove here with Sand and Pipo."

"Okay. Drive safe."

"Tomorrow... are you free?"

"I have an exam tomorrow."

"Huh?" His answer stuns me for several seconds.

I didn't know the first exams for the third-year students would be tomorrow. Damn, I'm a fucking idiot. I let Arc stay here until now instead of telling him to rest.

"Why the long face? It's okay. Just one subject tomorrow."

"You..."

"I'm not a fan of your pretentious face. Bye." Arc waves goodbye without thinking much and exits the room first.

My friends gradually leave one by one until my best friends and I are the only people left.

"Shall we?"

"Let me hit the restroom real quick," I say, but with my hand reaching my phone in my pocket. I head to the restroom so worried about that alien that I contact him. Arc picks up my call right away, not making me wait long.

[What?]

"Where are you?"

[In my car.]

A dead silence...

What should I do? There are so many words in my head that I fail to arrange them.

[If that's all...]

"Drive safe."

[Yeah.]

"And... You have an exam tomorrow. I hope you don't fall asleep during that."

[You brat.]

That brings a smile to my face as I step in front of the restroom. I'm about to enter it when I notice someone standing by the sink.

What the hell? Didn't he say he was in his car?

"You're smart. You'll nail it."

[How do you know better than me?]

"I just know."

Arc lowers his head, so I can't see his expression, but his actions are in my line of vision. He fidgets and turns the faucet on and off repeatedly. If he breaks the valve, he'd better take responsibility.

[You too. If you have good grades, I'll treat you to some dessert.]

"I feel like french lemon pie."

[You're requesting?]

"Spoil me a little, will you? You're being nice to me, anyway."

Arc turns the faucet and turns it off a few seconds later. He turns it on again...

[Wait for the result first.]

"Sure. Well... good night. Thank you for buying me the milk."

[I didn't mean to buy that. I just grabbed it because they ran out of energy drinks. Bye.
I'm going to start the engine.] Arc hangs up.

The water stops running as the faucet is turned off. The tall guy turns around and I witness the brightest smile on his face. The fierce Superior Prince smiles often lately.

"Hey, I... I need to pee," I lie, unable to speak properly.

"Yeah, same."

"You said you were in your car."

"Mind your business."

"Okay."

"The hell are you looking at?" He starts a fight now.

"Nothing."

"You're a cute pain in the ass."

"How is a pain in the ass cute?"

"It's the way you are... Bye." Arc ruffles my hair for a moment and walks in another direction. A few seconds later, Pipo and Sand catch up with me.

"What were you talking about?"

"Nothing. Why?"

"I just wonder what made P'Arc's ears so red."

"No idea."

"What about you, Arm? What's wrong?" asks Sand.

"Huh?"

"Your face is all red. Got a fever?"

"..."

"Take good care of yourself. The exam is approaching."

"I'm fine." It's just...

A side effect of talking to someone on the phone.

The hellish midterm exam is here. The first subject is the mandatory one, English. Even though my section is only occupied by electrical engineering students, the exam takes place in a massive room filled with students from several sections. There are around two hundred people here. What a crowd.

Plenty of students! Oddly enough, I'm interested in none of them.

"I think the error correction part will be the death of me."

"I'm about to die as well. My stomach is empty," I mutter. My friend snaps back.

"I want to cuss you out. There's still time. Get yourself a sandwich."

"It's a waste of time. I'd lose all my strength from running down. Forget it. I can usually have my first meal at noon."

"Nice."

"Right?"

"I'm being sarcastic, fucking idiot." Ouch! Being called a piece of shit would've hurt less than being called an idiot. Enough. I've been called that enough already.

"Wait. Is that my idol?"

"Right. I saw him. Shit, the Superior Prince is here!"

"Guys, P'Arc is here." The clamor from these grown men reverberates. The withered souls are revitalized in the blink of an eye. The crowd stirs before quietening.

I look at my third-year peer mentor in a proper student uniform from head to toe, a rare sight to witness. I've only seen him in soccer and workshop shirts and felt like donating new clothes to him. Today, everything is totally different.

"Are you here to check your popularity? The freshmen in the entire building are gluing their eyes on you," I greet him with these words after he strides toward our gang without batting an eye at anyone.

"I'm here to check on the one-night-miracle kid."

"Well, just wait and see. I'll get an A on this."

"It's just the beginning. Are you able to predict the future?" Again with his sarcasm. How upsetting.

"You give me a headache whenever we see each other."

"You give me an ache on... whenever we see each other as well."

"Ooooooooooh, my idol is funny." Pipo, you dumbass. Can't you see Arc is making a move on me? I'm mad. "Since you're here, please give us a blessing." Everyone folds their hands over their chests. I play along.

"Good luck."

"Saddhu~~~~~" Fuck. The students from the other departments are staring at us.

The next wonder of the world is giving these bastards a blessing in front of the exam room. What a rare sight.

Having received the blessing, the guys chatter away while I talk to my peer mentor.

"Don't you have an exam?"

"I do."

"Why are you here?"

"I said, to check on you."

"You did. Now go. You'll be late."

“My exam starts at ten.” Arc pauses and flicks his eyes to me. “When did you go to bed? Why are your eyes glazed?”

“One-night miracle. I didn’t get a wink of sleep.”

“Arm!” Arc raises his voice. His vicious expression is a sign of anger.

“I studied all subjects but stayed up to review everything.”

“Have you eaten?”

“Ah, I’ll eat after this.”

“Arm.”

“I know, but I’m fine.”

“You’re freaking stubborn.”

“Hey, I’m good at this.”

“Stay here. I’ll be right back.”

“Where are you going?”

“To find a stick to beat you.”

I gulp. My friends get goosebumps at the change of Arc’s mannerism.

The tall guy squeezes through the crowd in my line of vision, then he bolts out of sight. I have no clue where he’s headed, but I realize he’s in a sour mood. I consult the guys about what to do, yet Arc returns before we even reach a conclusion. Is he the flash? He might fly someday.

“Eat this.” Arc hands me a sandwich, panting.

“Why did you go this far? It’s my fault. Don’t be like this.”

“Eat.”

“I’m fine.”

“Eat, or your stomach will hurt.” I’m angry at myself for causing him trouble. Unable to reject him, I slowly unwrap the sandwich and take a bite in tears.

“Come in, students.”

The door opens with the professor's voice.

"Hey."

"Just eat. Let your friends go first." Arc pulls me to the side, out of the way of my friends entering the room one by one.

"It's too much. I'll puke if I have stomach pain."

"Don't shove it in. Only a few of your friends got inside. Here's water." Arc twists the lid off and passes the bottle to me.

"Thank you."

"Don't skip your meal next time."

"I know."

"Only I can talk. Shut up while you eat."

"Ham tastes bad."

"You bet. I picked it randomly."

"I wanted bacon."

"Picky brat. Next time, then."

"How much is this?"

"I said shut up while you eat."

"Water, please."

"Fucking naughty." Ignoring Arc's scolding, I gulp down the water. After swallowing half the sandwich, I take more bites. It's exciting to compete against time until the last student steps inside.

I check my watch. Three minutes before the exam begins.

"Arm, stay calm. Finish it before you get inside. Don't just shove it in and swallow. Chew."

Hmmm, I wish to ask if he's my peer mentor or an officer from the Ministry of Public Health to walk me through all these steps.

“Two minutes left.”

“Naughty brat. Don’t talk while you eat.”

Daaaaaaaaaamn, I’m about to spit fire.

“One minute.”

I look like a ruminant chewing grass, on the verge of throwing up. Seeing the tall guy’s softening eyes, I hold myself back and slower my pace until it’s finally the last bite.

A super big bite that will be hard to swallow. But I’ll do it for him.

I bite half of it and Arc suddenly bites the other half.

I stand there, speechless, my brain transforming into a black hole. Chewing, Arc hands me the water bottle. I accept it to drink in stupefaction before he pushes me inside the exam room.

“You were too slow. Get in. It’s time.”

“Yeah.”

“Do your best.”

“Yeah, you too...” Arc slams the door shut before I finish.

The professor is at the front of the room with the exam and answer sheets in her hands. Before I sit, she speaks to me.

“Show me your student card.”

“Here.” She takes my student card and looks back and forth between it and my face.

“Are you sick?”

I touch my cheek and reply in a whisper “No.”

But my chest is filled with emotions.

I could feel it. For a split second, quick like a blink of an eye, our lips touched. And the warmth lingers.

“The exam was a piece of cake.”

“Cooooooooooooool.”

"We'll get an A."

"I finished it in twenty minutes."

"Liar."

After the first subject, we have two hours until the next one in the afternoon. Fortunately, the subject wasn't as difficult as I imagined. My friends are bragging about how easy it was. Most students left the room early because the exam was really easy.

We're on the fourth floor of the building, and our next destination is the cafeteria. Still full, I follow the guys with no complaints. On our way from the third to the second floor, we have to pass an exam room for an unknown subject for a large section.

Students flock in front of the room down at the end of the corridor. The world is strangely small since we stumble across the third-year engineering guys.

"Wooooow, the angel gear code," someone says in excitement. I ignore everyone around me and keep walking after my friends.

"Give in already. Someone here is about to die from heartbreak."

What the hell? They're like hungry ghosts begging for merit.

"Arm."

"...!" I glance around.

"Arm."

"Oh...hey." It's Arc's friends, Copp, Bloom and Pond. The Superior Prince is nowhere to be seen.

"Done with the exam?" I halt in front of these tall guys and gesture to my friends to go to the cafeteria first.

"Yeah. You haven't started?"

"No. In ten minutes."

"Good luck."

"You too. Don't skip your meal next time. My friend is tired. Everyone is teasing him for running down the building." I frown, then understand what they're trying to say.

"I didn't mean to. I'll scold myself more often next time."

"How the hell can you fight yourself?" Not arguing, I shift my gaze around to subtly look for you-know-who. "Looking for Arc?"

Ah, maybe not so subtle.

"No. I'm just wondering why he's not here when it's about to start."

"He forgot something in his car."

"Oh."

"The professor is calling us in. We'll get inside now."

"What about P'Arc?"

"He'll be right back."

I nod and watch the third-year guys enter the room with their bags, which will be dropped at the front of the room according to the rules.

It's nine fifty seven. Once all third-year students are inside, silence replaces the prior noises outside. My heart, however, isn't as peaceful as the atmosphere since Arc still hasn't returned.

If you're late to some subjects, you'll be deemed absent. Not wishing that for Arc, I whip out my phone and call him immediately. I listen to the ringback tone for some time until I'm ready to give up, but he finally picks up.

"P'Arc, I'm in front of your exam room. The professor is handing out the sheets. Where are you? They'll mark you down as absent if you're late."

[I know.]

"Hurry up! I'm really worried. Are you okay?"

[I'm fine. Ar...]

"What's taking you so long? Should I go inside and inform the professor it's urgent?"

[Wait, it's not a big deal.]

"I don't know if your friends told the professor. Hold up, answer me first. Where are you? I'll run there. Or how about this? I'll check you in since we have similar names. Oh no. Our student cards are different."

[Arm, listen.]

"You're not listening to me."

[I am. But give me a sec. I'm in the exam room.]

"Huh?!!"

[I'm already inside.]

It feels like an invisible being kicks me off a cliff. My body plummets vertically. Soon, the door opens and I heave a sigh of relief as the Superior Prince walks out.

"Why didn't I see you?" I pout to hold my tears, on the verge of crying.

"I went into the other door and didn't see you either."

"That sucks."

"What a crybaby. We gotta talk after this."

"I didn't mean to," I whimper. "I was worried about you. I wouldn't have been worked up if you weren't important to me."

"I know."

"You don't."

"Arm."

"..."

"Why wouldn't I know how the person I love this much feels?"

Chapter 14

The Orbit of Anol and Anon

[The God of Fire]

All I can see right now is this boy's cheeky yet fucking adorable face. When we were on the phone earlier, I could hear the emotions in his voice. It was shaking and wavering like he was about to cry anytime, and I was correct...

The moment I opened the exam room door, I spot my peer mentee shouting into the phone outside. I would've berated him if he was someone else. This boy, however, is an exception. When I learned he did that out of worry, my heart raced in delight.

I'd never felt this way toward anyone before. He's the first and only...

"I'm sorry for causing trouble." Arm looks even gloomier, amusingly. I comfort him briefly.

"No one said anything. Go. I'll call you once I'm done here."

"Do your best."

"Yeah. You too."

"Bye." Arm scratches the back of his neck to hide his embarrassment, smiles sheepishly, and walks in another direction. It paints a smile on my face. I fucking like him. If only we were somewhere else, I would drag him back and kiss the hell out of him.

It takes me a while to collect myself and return inside. I didn't expect to face another version of my friends' teasing.

"HMMMMMMMMMM."

"Awwwwwwww."

The guys make those sounds simultaneously with playful expressions.

"Students, be quiet. It's getting started."

I sit back in my seat amid the giggles. Of course, everyone knows what happened. Arm stood outside and kicked a big fuss, startling everyone who could hear. Was I embarrassed? Absolutely not.

Why would I be embarrassed with such an amazing feeling?

Two hours don't feel long. The exam is easy for those who have studied well. Students are permitted to go to the restroom fifteen minutes after the starting time and leave fifteen minutes before the time is up. As always, no one goes home first after they've finished. Everyone gathers in front of the room to discuss the answers.

"Took you long enough. Did happiness distract you?"

"What?"

"Aw. 'I was worried about you.'" Pond's mocking voice gives me a headache.

"Fuck off."

"Was the exam easy?" My friend changes the topic.

"Yeah."

"Aw! It must've been due to Arm's blessing," says Copp.

Bloom chimes in "I was worried about you."

"Son of a bitch."

"That was super cute. He was looking for you before you got here, then he called you in worry when he couldn't find you. Are you going to let this kind of person go?" Needless to say, Arm is a common topic for us. They all know what happened between me and my peer mentee. I'm not hiding it, but I've never made it clear to them.

I let my actions speak for themselves. Once I win that kid's heart, I'll be clear. That's all.

"Guys, listen. There's no more exams today. Don't forget to study for tomorrow," interrupts our section president. Everyone responds in agreement before separating.

"Hey, wait. Someone dropped a pencil case. Whose is it?"

"How does it look?"

"Pink. Hello Kitty."

"That's Arc's." one of the engineering students calls my name with confidence. Why would that kind of thing remind them of me. Damn it.

"It's not mine."

"Oh, you've been carrying the Hello Kitty bag often lately. I thought you liked it."

"I don't like it, and that pencil case isn't mine."

"Okay~~ You don't like anything that isn't from Arm."

More teasing. I'm sick of it!

After everyone splits up, my friends and I have lunch together like usual. The difference is we're eating at the general building, not our department building.

The food is simple and repetitive as always. Either fried meat with basil or omelets with rice. It's not perfectly nutritious but I really can't think of anything else. I'm not serious about it since something else is more important...

"What are you doing?" Bloom cranes his head over as soon as I play on my phone.

"None of your business."

"Oh, oh, the cute boy page. Your peer mentee isn't the profile picture anymore. No need to be jealous of people who commented on it. Stupid."

I despised myself for some time when I refused to do anything but read those comments and threaten them in direct messages.

I stepped in immediately when any guy showed a sign of interest in Arm. As everybody knows, no one must make a pass at my person. It worked since no one flirted with Arm after that. I have no idea when my feelings changed, but I lost part of myself because of him.

A once jaded guy like me ran around and dealt with stupid shit. Laughable. The so-called Superior Prince is just a normal third-year student.

"Just check the page. Don't let me find out you're saving his photos in secret again," Pond teases relentlessly.

"I never did."

"Your phone gallery is full of him. Did you really not?"

"Mind your own business."

"He's the only one in your call history. You told him before going to the bar, You went to him before the exam started. Who is it?"

"There is more. You bought all the necessities for him. A shower cream, shampoo, toothbrush. Wooow, you're acting like you own him when he's just your peer mentee. I feel fucking sorry for you."

"This is the life of an unfortunate man. Ugh... poor you."

Tired of their nonsense, I call the familiar number to end this annoyance since they're already talking about Arm. It may be strange that I give them no response. If they tease me, I'll just flaunt.

[Are you done?] Arm never made me wait long. His cheeky voice after picking up the call can put me in a good mood all day.

"Yeah. What about you? Have you eaten?" I ask, staring at my friends. They flip me off in protest against my cocky action.

[I have. I'm getting ready for the exam in the afternoon.]

"Hanging up, then. I'm just checking on you."

[Wait. W...Was it okay? Did you finish the exam in time?]

"Worried about me?"

[No. I'm just asking.]

"If so, I won't answer."

[Is it so hard to put me at ease.]

"Yes."

Silence on the other end. If it were before, Arm would've hung up and shouted 'Whatever'. It's different now. We remain quiet, but I can tell he's dying to ask me something.

[P'Arc, I...]

"Say your name and I'll answer it."

[I...]

"Hanging up." I fucking love to mess with this kid.

[P'Arc... was the exam okay?]

"..."

[Arm would like to stick his nose in.]

"What a pain in the neck," It takes him some time to act cute, but I fucking love him. I love him the way he is. "I finished it in time and felt confident for the most part. No worries."

[That's all.]

"Yeah."

[Thank you.] I frown, confused by the naughty boy's words.

"For what?"

[Thank you for putting me at ease. My head was so full of you that I couldn't think of anything else and just felt worried.]

"..."

[Yeah. That's all. **I was worried.**]

CLATTER!!

My utensils clatter on the plate. I'm short of breath, my body freezing in place. Everything happened and ended in a few seconds. His clear voice however lingers in my mind.

"Arc."

"..."

"Hey, Arc, Arc, what's wrong"

"He's in a coma. We gotta admit him to the hospital. Don't die, bro. Arccccccc!"

[The God of Fire: End]

"The exam is oveeeeeeeeeer."

I shout at the top of my lungs after the last exam has ended, feeling more exhilarated than ever. Freed from all concerns. Would I be able to do it? Would I have to retest? Would I disappoint my parents? I put a lot of pressure on myself. Finally... it's over.

Whatever will be, will fucking be. I did my best.

I'll be having dinner with my peer mentors this evening since I'm the last to finish the exam. The exam schedules for freshmen were packed, while the ones for the older students were empty like the Teletubbies Hill. I'm jealous but I bet they have more concern than us.

I stand in front of the dormitory at five in the evening, waiting for my second and fourth year peer mentors to pick me up. Shortly after, the familiar car pulls up. I greet my peer mentors in the front seats and open the door at the back,

"Fuck!!"

"What?" The bored voice belongs to no one but the Superior Prince. It's been a while.

"Y...You're coming with us?"

"Why would I miss a meal with my gear code?"

"You usually drive your car. I'm not used to seeing you in the backseat."

"Are you done yammering? Get in." Not daring to disobey Arc, I compliantly squeeze inside next to the tall guy, my heart oddly racing.

Even though all my peer mentors are here, my attention is somehow only on Arc.

"How was the exam, nong Arm?" The engineering princess breaks the silence as the car slowly takes off.

"Good."

"Were there any hard subjects?"

"Mechanics. It was too much. I wanted to die." The thought of it sends me chills.

"It's university life, a bit tougher than high school. A fun part of life, nonetheless," Yeepoon consoles me.

Jet, our driver, expresses his opinion “I wish I could go back to my high school days. Not because it’s tiring but because I want a new girlfriend.”

“P’Jet!!”

“What? I’m kidding.”

“I’ll deal with you. Be careful.”

“Ooooooh, so scary.”

“Sleep outside.”

“My pleasure. I want to stay over at a friend’s place.” Their bickering is hilarious. I wonder if they’ve ever fought. Still, they’re pleasant to see. They’re so fucking cute...

I want to have a happy love if possible. Hopefully, I’ll find that person... But when I glance at the guy beside me, he’s already staring at me with serious eyes.

“Do you have a problem, looking at me?” I ask, cheekily.

“No.”

“Come on. Say it. Let’s talk it out.”

“It’s nothing. I just missed you.”

“...!”

“Awwwwwww, I’m happy to see you guys on such good terms.”

Stunned, I say nothing and let the prince-princess couple take care of everything. They relieve the tension slightly but not completely.

“Seriously, you two,” Jet says in a somewhat stern voice. “Are you hiding anything from me and Poon?”

“I...I’m not hiding anything. I never keep secrets from you.” I sound flustered, but it’s too late now. I should’ve shut up.

“Really? You’re acting strange. It’s like... me when I was hitting on Yeepoon.”

DAMN!!

Sweating, I blink stupidly at Arc, who remains unbothered, gazing out the window. Why are you acting artistic right now?! He leaves me to face this alone.

“We should get along since we’re in the same gear code. Am I right, P’Arc?”

“Yeah,” he replies plainly. Instead of feeling happy, I get more worried. Is he upset with my denial? What should I do? This is stressful. The discomfort nudges me to inch closer to the tall guy and use the chance as the couple’s eyes are on the road to hold his hand.

Arc turns to me for a moment quietly and just intertwines our fingers.

“What’s this?” Arc whispers for only us to hear, his voice drowned by the music in the car.

“It’s nothing. What about you? Is something wrong?”

“I’m stressed.”

“About the exams?”

Arc shakes his head and leans closer to whisper in my ear “I want to have sex with someone here.”

Ugggggggggh, you piece of shit. Is this okay? I shouldn’t have wasted my time worrying about him. His cheeky smirk irritates me even more. Give me back my time.

“Go be a pervert somewhere else.”

“It’s funny when you blush.” My hand flies over my cheek. I drop my gaze to avoid eye contact.

Arc doesn’t force me to look at him. We just hold each other’s hand until they sweat and release them when we arrive at the restaurant selected by Jet and Yeepoon. We have a great time together like usual and even make a bet about our scores. The loser must do whatever the winner wants. And I... I have no choice but to join in..

I return to the dormitory at eight. As soon as I open the door to hang out with my roommate, I find him different. Sand is dolled up from head to toe.

“Going on a date?” I ask in curiosity.

“Didn’t you read the group chat?” What? I shake my head. I was busy eating and bickering with Arc, so I had no time to check the messages.

“What’s this for?”

“A celebration with our dorm mates at the bar.”

“Again?” They’re causing me trouble again. The problem is I can’t be bothered to ask for my third-year peer mentor’s permission. Even though Arc quit meddling and granted me the freedom to have fun with my friends lately, I feel bad deep down.

“Will you go or not?” Sand sighs, his voice pressuring. Well... since the exams are over, we should celebrate.

“I want to. But can we not go to Bang-on Pochana? I’m afraid to run into P’Arc there.”

“Ask him.”

“I feel bad. He probably won’t know if I sneak out.”

“Yeah, yeah. We’re not going to Bang-on Pochana. Take a shower and get dressed. Tonight will be a blast!”

“Let’s go!”

After filling my stomach with my peer mentors, it’s time to fill my system with alcohol with my friends. How lucky am I to be born as Arm? I quickly shower and wear my perfume. What about my looks? I go all out like I’ve never gone to the bar before.

Pipo catches up with us soon after I’ve showered. We’ll gather in Yo’s room first. The heavyweights have booked a table since we’re not going to just any bar. It’s a club near the university where they don’t check ID, but there’s one condition: no booze for underage people.

Bummer. It’s okay, though. I’ll just flirt with the girls.

Us engineering boys arrive at the club at ten. The blasting upbeat music feels unfamiliar, yet it’s not hard to adjust myself.

Simple beverages are served at our table. Knowing the club owner, Guy has successfully reserved a VIP table for us, but... the beverages he ordered are insanely healthy. Pomegranate juice, orange juice, mocktails, and soft drinks.

I'm going to cry. Let's take some photos for keepsake.

"What are you looking at? Come on. Cheers!"

CLANK!!

The sucky life of a freshman has begun. The night is long. The exciting music drives some of the guys to rise and dance on the dancefloor. I look around while sipping on a mocktail coolly.

"The girls here are fucking pretty. Look...at nine o'clock. I recall she's a health science student."

"How smart."

I listen to Pipo blabbering until almost eleven. No one is drunk except some who drank with others at other tables.

"I'll be right back. Need to take a leak."

"I'll go with you." I need to pee after a long sit. Sand and I edge through the massive crowd to the restroom. The bad news is it's packed. We have to queue for so long to relieve ourselves.

"Hey..." I turn my head back and forth, hearing the voice of a girl in a fitted black dress. "Yes, you."

Shit! She's speaking to me.

"A...Ah, yes?"

"Give me a ride."

"To where?" She closes the gap between us with her slender, perfect body. Trembling, I've never been flirted with by a girl before. She's even grinding against me right now.

"My place." Whooooooooooooa, I wish to go but I can't. I don't know how to do it.

There goes my pride.

“Well, I... Well, I’m here with my friends. I’m really sorry.”

“Are you a high schooler clubbing for the first time?”

“No. I’m a first-year student.”

“What a baby,” she grumbles, withdrawing her skilled hands from me. I thought I was free. I didn’t expect her to leave an awful memory by kissing my cheek, staining it with her sickly lipstick mark.

What the fuuuuuuuuuuck?

“Fuck, you’re so hot. Gotta give it to you,” Sand points out enthusiastically. I’m about to pee my pants. Shit. I’ll never go to the club again.

I keep the mix of emotions inside and return to the table with my best friend. Certainly he will tell the gang about what just happened. I puff out my chest proudly despite the shivers running down my spine.

“Fuck. It was crazy. A girl kissed Arm’s cheek.”

“What?!” The guys are shocked the second Sand delivers the news.

“He got attacked in front of the restroom. Insane.”

“Sorry for being born hot.”

“Hehehehe, I’m jealous. Let’s have an exclusive interview.” Pipo stretches an invisible microphone to me, and I play along.

Before I utter a word, the Superior Prince squeezes through the crowd with his large-built body. Damn it. My short-lived happiness is turning to hell.

“Didn’t someone say P’Arc didn’t come to this club?”

“I don’t know.”

“Arm.” Wow~ Given my peer mentor’s voice and expression, I’ll be dead tonight.

“Rest in peace, Arm.” Why the fuck are my friends mourning for me?

“Poor you. You’re still young.”

"We'll always love you, bro."

"We'll never forget you, Arm."

"Hehehehehehe."

These motherfuckers. They always kick me out of the boat and paddle away during tough times, leaving me to face the problems alone.

They know the angel gear code has a strong bond, and Arc has made it extremely clear that he doesn't want me to go out at night without permission. I've been caught red-handed, my hair standing on ends.

"Help me think. What's my excuse?"

"Act cute. Put on your innocent face the way you always do. That'll end it!"

"For P'Arc?"

"No. For you. How are you supposed to get away when he looks furious like that?"

Arc is here, you son of a bitch! He's coming here. Call the ambulance because someone is about to be murdered. The Superior Prince will kill me over and over. Oh, my goodness. Help me, all holy spirits.

The tall guy stops in front of me, and my friends instantly make room for the Superior Prince. Arc settles in the seat beside me. My heart, including the guys', are drumming.

"Arm." His voice jolts me.

I blurt an excuse in nervousness. "Hey, I didn't want to come. The guys invited me."

"..." Silence. No response on the other end. Uneasy, I resume my explanation.

"I admit I sneaked out without asking you first, but I did nothing and just sipped on water."

"..."

"And when I queued to use the restroom, the sexy girl suddenly kissed me on the cheek. I didn't do anything, I swear."

"..."

“Trust me.”

Arc inclines his head, his eyes on me. It takes a while for him to speak. “I just found out a girl kissed your cheek when you confessed.” Fuck! I’m itching to slap my mouth for being a dumbass. Arm, you damn idiot.

“Haha, this is fun. I fooled you. Right, guys?”

“Yeeeeeeeeeah, what a hilarious joke. Even P’Arc believed it. Gotta give it to you. Why don’t you do stand-up comedy?” This is my only chance of survival since my head is completely blank. Thankfully, my friends have paddled back to rescue me.

“Really?” asks Arc in a darker voice.

“Yes.”

“What happened to your cheek?”

“A mosquito bite. Take this.” I slap my own face.

“Okay. I’ll trust you.”

Pheeeeeeeew, what a relief.

“If I’m an idiot.”

Holy fuck, I’m dead.

“Hey, I did wrong.” I keep my head down. It’s embarrassing to be like this in front of my friends, but I must return to the dormitory unscathed. If my third-year peer mentor beats me to a pulp here, I’ll be a disgrace to my family.

“Will you confess?”

“I sneaked to the club without asking your permission. And... I did nothing and the girl kissed my cheek out of the blue. That wasn’t my fault.” My only option is to put my pitiful eyes to work. I flutter my eyelids, tear up a little, and gaze up at him at an acute angle from the ground.

“I would’ve let you come if you’d asked. No need to sneak out.”

“I was afraid you’d scold me.”

“I want to scold you more now.”

“How did you know, anyway? I didn’t tell anyone. Plus...” I glance around the bar. “I don’t see any third-year engineering students here. How did you find out I was here?”

“Ask your friends.”

“...?”

“Didn’t you take a group photo together? They posted on Facebook and tagged you.”

“Shit! I check on my phone and spot my face in the center of the photo with the caption ‘Lala Lala~’ What a fucking blast we were having.

“Did you ‘lala’ enough?”

“Yessssssssss.”

“Will you leave now?” The question sounds threatening. Will he kick me if I say no?

“Y... Yes.”

“Let’s go, then.”

“I came here with my friends.”

“I’m giving Arm a ride. Are you guys okay with that?” Arc asks the guys around me. Why would they have a problem? They’re ready to offer me to him.

“Take him. I told you to call P’Arc, but you wouldn’t listen.”

You fucking assholesssssss. I’ll deal with each of you one by one once we’re all back. But now, I must survive the ride with my harsh peer mentor unscathed.

Arc drags me to his car and we accelerate to his apartment. Once arrived, I take a shower obediently without kicking a fuss.

I do everything out of habit, wearing his clothes and using his stuff. Finally I step out of the bathroom to face him a while after mustering up the courage.

Arc sits on the edge of the bed and stares at me in silence which unsettles me even more.

“I’m sorry.”

“Sit here.”

"I did wrong."

"Sit here." I walk over nervously. Losing patience, Arc pulls me into his arms before I even get close and we roll back on the bed.

"Hey." He's squeezing me too hard.

"Your face is red," whispers Arc. My face flushes harder.

"I'm hot."

"You just took a shower."

"So? I get hot easily. Will you let go of me now?"

"Why would I? I haven't punished you."

"I did nothing wrong."

"You let her kiss your cheek? Did you like it? Want me to deal with you?"

"Hey, hey, that's not my fault. She did it. Ouuuuuch, you bastard." Arc bites my ear before I finish. His perfectly shaped lips soon travel down to my neck. Wait. Calm down.

"I'm sorry. Hey, I'm sorry. I did wrong."

"Will you do it again?" asks Arc, his face and nose in my neck.

"I won't. Waaaaaah."

Rrrrr!

I'm saved by the bell upon the ringtone. Arc goes quiet for a brief moment before rising to grab his phone. I spring up and check myself in the mirror. Damn... is he a dog? He left a bite mark on my neck again.

"Hey, what is it?" says the tall guy into the phone. I eavesdrop attentively. "Where are you? I'm busy right now."

"What? Hold up. When did I say you guys could come?"

His voice grows more stressed, then he ends the call with one word. "Fuck."

My peer mentor is in a good mood.

"What's wrong?" I ask once he hangs up.

"My friends are here. In front of my apartment."

"Huh??!" I'm flabbergasted...

"Stay here, I'll go open the door."

"You can't. I have a bite mark on my neck. I don't want them to see it, it's bad."

"Don't mind it."

"How? You're my peer mentor. People will look at me weird because of what you did.

Can I not see your friends? Please. Waaaah." The tall guy sighs. He throws me back onto the bed and covers my whole body with a blanket.

Anon has become a bolster.

"Wait here. I'll make them stay in the living room. They won't be here long."

"Okay."

The only question in my head is... what the fuck am I doing here?

The noises outside get all my attention. Seemingly the whole gang is here, given the clamor. The more shocking thing is, in five minutes, someone opens the bedroom door.

"Arc, I'm using the bathroom."

"Mm." The whistle reaches my ears occasionally. I'm like a blind person with excellent hearing. I know the person entering the room hasn't left. He paces around frustratingly.

"Arc, I'll watch the TV in here." Upon those words, heavy footsteps approach. If I'm not mistaken, the apartment owner is rushing in like the Flash.

"Go watch in the living room."

"Why do you care? I watch the TV in this room all the time. Hey, Pond, Bloom, come here."

"Yeah. Wait a sec. I'm grabbing snacks."

I feel the weight on the mattress and someone pressing against my shaking body under the blanket.

“Move to the other side.” Arc’s voice for sure. Thank you for saving my life, though it’s my fault.

“Okay, okay. Are you ready, by the way?”

“What?” The conversation starts between two friends, with me as a good listener next to them.

“The semifinal. The student association will kill us if we lose.”

“It’s not that big of a deal.”

“You have a great assistant. Speaking of Arm, I saw his friends checking in at the bar. Why don’t you go and deal with him?” Copp asks, knowingly. I wonder what excuse Arc will make.

“Why would I?”

“You’re protective of him.” A warmth spreads in my heart all of a sudden.

“Mind your own business.”

“Seriously, I would hit on my peer mentee as well if he was this cute.”

“Bullshit.” Why do I have to listen to this topic?

“Aren’t you afraid he would wander off the right path, going to a bar like that? I’m sure he’s attracting a lot of people.” Still not stopping? Are they still talking about me?

“If he goes, he knows he can take care of himself.”

“Oh, oh, I see. I’m just confused. You usually show up wherever he is. Why the hell are you home today? I was going to invite you to the pub together at first.”

“Go if you want. I’ll go to bed.”

“This early? Are you hiding something from me, Arccccc?”

“What do you want? You’re being a pain in the ass,” Arc fumes, his voice audibly irritated.

“Nothing, I’ll just drink here.”

“Go drink at the bar.”

“Okay. You’re being weird, though. Why are you perching on the edge of the bed?”

“It’s nothing.”

“Are you scared I’ll see something?” Copp pauses before continuing. It startles me so much I nearly fall off the bed. “Arm, won’t you say hi?”

Fuck! Don’t react. Don’t react. Don’t react.

“Are you joking? Why are you calling his name?”

“Oh, he’s beside you. Why can’t I call him?”

“...!!”

“In case you don’t know, your peer mentee’s feet are jutting out of the blanket. Beides, I knew he was here when I saw his shoes at the front, dumbass.”

“ ... ”

“What are you two doing? It must’ve been fun.”

It’s embarrassing as hell. Where can I hide my faceeeeeeeee?

Life goes on. Puff your chest without fear.

After a week of being teased by Arc’s friends about me getting caught in the Superior Prince’s apartment with his bite mark on my neck, the way they look at me has changed.

It’s not terrible. Their gazes are amused and they often try to tease me. Without Arc at my back, they would’ve mocked the hell out of me. Today is another day. Fortunately, none of them have time to make playful faces at me due to the semifinal.

Engineering vs. economics. As it’s my duty, I take care of the players. We have a lot of staff members, and the support team is working hard. The grandstand is bustling with students getting seated.

Arc once said his friends and he were carrying the department’s hope on their shoulders, so they’re more intense than ever.

“The economics team kicked the ball. What a thunderous cheer. I, Basil Crispy Pork, from education, am your commentator again today. Oh! An engineering player got the ball. Did not see that coming.”

The game is entertaining because of the commentator. He never misses a game, always blabbering, having the most fun.

“Wow, number nine dashes off. Calm down. The goal is here, not in Africa.”

The spectators cry out as the engineering captain dribbles the ball into the penalty area, incredibly close to scoring a goal the fastest in a decade of university soccer (exaggerating).

“Ugggggggh!”

“Unbelievable. The ball flies over the goal toward Mo Chit. It’s okay. You can start over. The economics goalkeeper throws the ball from his side and the Athingpong catches it. This is insane. Bang-on Pochana snatches the ball in the blink of an eye.”

“P’Arccccccccccc!! P’Arc, go!”

“Bang-on, you can do it.”

“If you win, Miss Bang-on will treat you to four rounds of booze.”

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“The player is instantly pumped after getting hyped by free booze. SangSom is waiting for you. Bang-on sprints and passes the ball to Aunty Somjit Pork Cutting Board. Pork Cutting Board kicks the ball to Uncle Toon Aromatic Thai Suki. What a legendary team. Let’s see if this time they will...willl...”

“...!!”

“The ball soars over the goal again.”

The game continues, but no one scores a goal in the first half. Arc is the only one in my eyes. He’s tripped several times, and I’ve stood up several times in shock. Arc endures it and keeps running. I wish to tell him off, but I also feel his ambition.

When the first half is over, I jog over to take good care of my peer mentor.

The tall guy sinks in a chair, drenched in sweat, panting frequently to the point he might fall down again.

“Are you okay? You fell pretty hard earlier.”

“I almost died.”

“Why didn’t you just die? Why just almost?”

“Fucking brat.”

I’m actually worried. I’m worried every time he falls or gets hurt. Oddly enough, I’ve never felt this way. It’s out of control. I suppose I’ve fallen into his trap. Totally defeated.

“Water,” requests Arc, noticing my silence. I quickly fetch a water bottle, remove the lid and hold it out.

“Here.”

“An inhaler, too.”

“Here it is.” I have a lot in my pocket just in case. More is better than less.

“A refreshing towel.”

Sure thing. I bought loads of it since the ones from the student association are shabby. I had to spend my own money.

“You have everything?”

“I’m the best. I have everything you want.”

“Let me kiss your head, then.”

“Fuck off.”

“No? Stay over at my place for a night, then.”

“Why do I have to? I’m not going if it’s going to be like that night. I’m mad at you.”

“My friends didn’t care.” His voice becomes so gentle that I gaze up. Arc is smiling the smile that takes the lives of those who witness it. Strengthening up, I don’t advert my eyes despite my crazily pounding heart.

“Your friends mocked me.”

“They knew. They didn’t mean to embarrass you.”

“Knew what? They knew I was there since the beginning?”

“No. They knew I like you. That I’m head over heels.”

“ ... ”

“What about you? Are you sure about your feelings now?”

I’m at a loss for words. What do I do? What do I say? I thought I was certain, yet I drop my gaze to the ground. Arc is being so clear. What about me? I still can’t find the answer for myself, But I feel really good to be with this person.

I don’t see him as the Superior Prince. I don’t see him as more special than anyone like before. Arc is Arc, an important person to me.

“No.”

“ ... ”

“But I’ll be at ‘head over heels’ soon, I guess.”

The multiple-time champion, the engineering school soccer team has lost their nickname.

We lost a few minutes before the game ended by zero to one. Not an ugly score, yet the players are walking to the sidelines with their heads down. The students on the stand cry at the Superior Prince’s defeat while the staff members and coach embrace each other, saddened by the loss of free booze.

Everything overwhelms me all at once, and I have no clue what to do. Arc says nothing but, ‘it’s okay,’ and joins his gang. I don’t want to interrupt them.

I return to the dormitory with the guys, who grumble about the defeat. It lasts for a moment because they quickly move on to brainstorming about how to comfort the player. Ideas are shared, but none can be executed except by sending encouraging messages to the student association.

Everything turns back to normal. The next day, everyone attends classes like nothing has ever happened. Only Arc and his friends are glummer than usual. Arc has always kept his cool image, but it's worse now. Even Pipo and Sand notice.

"Do you think something is wrong with our idol? Is he sad that we lost yesterday?"

"Right. Something is strange."

"Arm, have you talked to the Superior Prince?"

"No." I wished, but I thought it was better to leave him alone. I'm unsure now.

"For the record, the student association expected victory. I heard they asked for more budget, so this would affect their budget next year."

"Is it that serious?" I ask in puzzlement.

"Yeah. I wonder if P'Arc got scolded. I don't want my idol to be stressed. It's not fun. Not exhilarating."

The information from my best friends worries me. After classes, I buy some milk and snacks for Arc. I've hardly done this before.

Arc usually hangs out with his friends at the marble table behind the civil engineering workshop room. As expected, the tall guy is there with his friends. Everyone looks evidently stressed.

"Hey," I greet, unable to think of anything else. They all stare at me and respond.

"Aw, nong Arm. What brings you here?"

"Well... I walked past the store and bought some snacks. And... and..."

"And you somehow walked past the civil engineering workshop room?" Bloom asks with a smile. I don't deny it.

"Yeah."

"It's on a different path to the electrical engineering building."

"I just happened to walk by. I was taking a stroll. Can't I do that?"

"Of course, you can. You can walk anywhere you want. Come sit."

I step closer without wasting a second and settle next to the tall guy. Arc smiles and ruffles my hair into a mess.

"You're fucking troublesome." Does he say it in a positive or negative way? I can't tell.

"I bought you snacks since you did well in the soccer game."

"I had tin can biscuits."

"They suck. Here you go. I bought you brownies, butter cakes and soy milk." I brought enough for all of them to avoid being accused of favoritism.

"Arc doesn't drink soy milk," Copp cuts in. I'm stunned that I never knew anything.

"Ah... I didn't know. I will..."

"I can drink it." Arc stabs a straw into the box.

"Wait, Arc." Too late. He finishes the box in one minute. Why is he drinking something he doesn't like for me? I'm not okay with this.

"Throw it away if you don't like it. Or just give it to me."

"I drank it all. How was your day?" Arc switches the subject.

"Good. No problem. What about you?"

"I got crazy."

"Aren't you always?" I shoot and change the subject. "Did you guys get scolded yesterday?"

"About what?"

"The game."

"Who would scold us? We're celebrating our first defeat in years tonight."

"Just like that?"

"Yeah. Quit worrying. Nobody is stressed about that. We're acting strange because of the exam results."

Fuck! I forgot.

“Did you fail?” The guy beside me shakes his head. The others laugh, confusing me even more.

“I’m top of the class.” Damn... as expected from the Superior Prince. “I can’t smile as it’s the rule of our gang. We mourn those who failed.”

“Oh, who failed?”

“Both of us. Damn it!! Only Arc and Pond passed.”

It’s getting chaotic because I have to listen to the gloomy guys whining out of the blue. It’s almost six when we finally split up. I return to the dormitory to Sand lying on his bed in only his underwear.

Sand is grinning blissfully. Needless to say, his relationship with the Nursing Princess is coming close to lovers, but he still hasn’t made it clear to us.

“You’re late,” my roommate greets, craning his head up and shifts his attention back to his phone.

“I went to Arc and his friends. I know why they looked stressed.”

“What? Why? How? Spilllll!!” Only the Superior Prince can divert his attention from his girl. What a moron.

“Just the exam results. His friends failed, so they were sad.”

“Awwwwww, poor them.”

“Yeah. And I also learned your idol hates beans.” I never knew despite having known him for months. Arc always wolfed down everything when the gear code had meals together.

“Wait. Does he not like them, or is he allergic to them?” asks Sand in a startlingly low voice.

“He doesn’t like them.”

“Did you ask? What if he’s allergic? Did he consume any beans?”

“I bought him soy milk and he finished all of it. It should be fine.”

“Daaaaaaaamn, you don’t care about my idol at all. Wait.” Sand taps away on his phone before he finishes and speaks to me in an even more stern voice, “People who are allergic to food will slowly get itchy and headaches, then they’ll get nauseous, puke and lose consciousness.”

“I...It’s not that bad.” Don’t be dramatic.”

“Their respiratory system will collapse. What if P’Arc can’t breathe and his condition gets worse?”

“...”

“Shit! It’s fatal!”

“Huuuuuh? Fatal?!”

“Yeah.”

I wasn’t worried. But now I am. I pace back and forth in the room before deciding to call the tall guy. Arc always picked up my calls fast. This time, however, there’s no response. I text him just to be left unread.

“Sand, I’ll be right back.” I wouldn’t have been worked up had my trashy friend not mentioned allergies.

“Where are you going?”

“To P’Arc’s place.”

“Did you call him?”

“I did. No one picked up.”

“Will you be able to get in? You don’t have a key.” Sand points out.

“I do.”

“Insaaaaaaane. Let me duplicate it. I’ve always wanted to surprise my idol at his place.”
What the fuck? I shouldn’t have told him.

“Go chat with your girl. I’ll call you later.”

“Okay. Tell me if you need someone to call an ambulance.”

“You’re so annoying.” Arc must be okay. But, for me to be certain and have peace of mind to sleep well tonight, I’ll visit him at his apartment.

I start the engine and drive to the condominium. For a while, I pace back and forth in the lobby, praying, meditating, diving, admiring the corals, and doing everything except going up. Eventually, the worry in my chest pushes me to make up my mind and go up to his apartment.

Knock, knock, knock.

I knock on the door out of courtesy and eavesdrop on him, but there’s no sound from the you-know-who. I call him again and fail once again. Arc sets his phone to vibrate, so he sometimes misses calls.

I take a deep breath and stare at the key in my hand until my vision blurs. Let’s do it! It’s now or never. I’ll unlock the door.

CLICK!

The door opens to the moderately lit room with no sign of the guy I’ve been looking for. I sincerely pray I won’t find him lying on the floor unconscious. That would devastate me.

“P’Arc, a...are you okay? P’Arc?” I keep calling and receive no response. I then take the liberty of entering his bedroom with no shame. I’m worried about him. Don’t scold me on this.

“What are you doing?”

“Shit!!”

The low voice jolts me so hard that I nearly fall backward. Arc didn’t go anywhere. He just stepped out of the bathroom, soaked. I guess he was showering. Arc also looks fine, showing no symptoms Sand mentioned. He was being dramatic.

“Why are you here?”

“I...I called you, but you didn’t pick up. I was worried.”

“I was taking a shower and didn’t hear anything.”

“It’s okay. Mmmm, Sand said you could be allergic to beans and I got scared. I was ready to call an ambulance.”

"I'm not allergic to beans. I just don't like them."

"But you drank the soy milk. I felt terrible."

"I can eat anything you get me. Why wouldn't I drink that when you bought it just for me?"

"Waaaaaah, I was afraid you'd die."

"If one of us would die first, it'd be you. Why are you whining?" Fuck. He never comforts me, messing with me all the time.

Relieved now, I watch Arc walk to the closet and get dressed unhurriedly. I assume he's celebrating with the other soccer players tonight as he said. It's my queue to leave.

"Since you're fine, I'll be off."

Rrrr...!

The ringtone cuts in. Arc quickly puts on his shirt and grabs his phone from the nightstand. He soon strides toward me.

"Shhhhhhh," he shushes me before picking up the call.

"Yeah. You're already there?" I don't really understand the situation. Arc is on the phone but also pushing me against the wall with no way to escape. Damn... what's with him?

"I'm at my place. Just showered."

"..."

"Yeah. You're coming up? Don't. My room is messy. Wait in the lobby."

The handsome face leans closer until our noses touch, and I hold my breath instinctively. His sharp eyes are more serious than ever, incomprehensible.

"I'm alone, but I'll eat something first."

"..."

"The bar doesn't serve food. I'll be fucking hungry."

I have no idea what the person on the other end is saying, but it doesn't matter. My concern is I can neither step back nor forward. I can only open my eyes and look at Arc, waiting for something.

"Give me ten minutes. Yeah...thanks a lot."

Upon saying that, Arc leans even closer. At that second, our lips touch, and my head goes wild. "The food is delicious. Smells so good." Arc pulls away slightly. He meets my gaze and smiles as if knowing my weakness. Yeah, I lost. I'm melting right now.

"I'll have another bite."

Arc kisses me again. He pulls back, kisses me, pulls back, and repeats.

Waaaaaaaaaaaaah, he's kissing me. He's kissing me~~~~

"It's fucking good. I'm happy."

"..."

"How can you ask for a bite? What's mine is mine. Hanging up. See you." Arc ends the call and faces me.

My head is empty. Not knowing what to say, I freeze as tears trickle down my cheeks. They stop when Arc gently wipes them off with his fingers.

"You knew you wouldn't get to leave so easily after showing up at my place, didn't you."

"Mmmmm."

At that moment, the tall guy cups my face in his hands and kisses me. It's different from earlier because he's not just pecking and pulling away. Arc parts my lips with his tongue and slips it into my mouth slowly. I can't breathe, feeling like I'll faint any time.

He runs his tongue along my teeth before tangling it with mine, making saliva oozing out the corners of my mouth. Arc is a good leader, while I'm an inexperienced follower, letting him guide me. The Superior Prince is the Superior Prince, after all.

The one I lose to again and again.

His kiss is gentle, yet arousing me at the same time. I twitch like I'm getting electric shocks.

I have no idea how long it's been until he frees me. I gasp for air like crazy, my body feeble with barely any strength to stand. Arc supports my body, not letting me fall.

"Since you're a good boy today, I won't do anything." whispers the low voice in my ear.

"..."

"But don't think you can get away next time. I won't let you off."

"Waaah, P'Arc. I..."

I'm already defeated.

Hey, Sand, Arc doesn't need an ambulance. It's me... who is going to... die.

Chapter 15

More Special than Anyone

BANG!

"Arm, why the hell did you slam the door?"

Sand cries out as soon as I've arrived, lifting his head from his pillow and scowling at me.

"Sorry. My hand slipped."

"Yeah. Whatever. How's my idol?"

"H... He's fine. P'A...P'Arc is okay. You were overthinking it." I was almost finished.

Good thing Arc was going to party with his friends. Otherwise, I wouldn't have returned to the dormitory in this state.

"I'm glad the Superior Prince is fine. But what the fuck is wrong with you, stuttering like that? Your face is red. Are you sick?" Sand narrows his eyes suspiciously. Flustered, I pretend to busily open the closet and walk to my desk to calm my mind.

I almost died while driving back here. Arc had... attacked my heart.

It was my first time being kissed like my soul was being sucked out. Everything happened all of a sudden. The feeling lingers as my body remembers it. Even when sitting on the edge of my bed I still tremble.

"Arm. Hey, Arm."

"Huh? What?" Being kicked out of my train of thought, I'm back to reality.

"I'm asking what's wrong with you. Are you sick? Should I reserve a funeral hall?"

"Fuck off. I...I'm fine. I'll go take a shower."

"Won't you eat first?"

"I'll shower first."

"Hurry up. I'm hungry. I'll tell Pipo to meet with us here first."

"Yeah. Give me ten minutes."

I grab my towel and rush into the bathroom, hoping the water will relax me somehow. My head is occupied with Arc's kiss.

The warmth from his large hands, his sly yet loving gaze, his scent, and his touch. I remember everything despite my blurry eyes back then.

"Stop thinking, stop thinking." Arc, have you any idea you're driving someone insane? Shit, will I be able to sleep tonight?

I must not think about him.

I must forget what happened.

I must look at it as a dream to save my heart from pounding to death.

I tell myself that repeatedly and busy myself with all sorts of activities to distract myself. It works, but for like...five minutes. After that, I fail to shake Arc out of my mind. I'm going to fucking cry.

I sleep just like that.

"Hey, Sand, what's wrong?"

I'm startled to wake up in the morning to find the guy on the bed opposite me in this state. Sand looks awful, trembling as if holding back a sob. He clutches his phone in one hand and puts an inhaler into his nose with the other to relieve some detrimental symptoms.

"Waaaaaaah, my life."

"Wait. What's wrong?" Do you need help?" He shakes his head. "Tell me."

Sand was happy and well yesterday. How come he looks like a haunting ghost now?

"My life is hurt."

"Wait. Calm down."

"But not ruined."

"..."

"Today my heart is broken. Remind myself to stand tall no matter what..." Just sing the whole song so I can go back to sleep. Damn it!

"Should I call Po over?"

Sand shakes his head. I step out of bed and settle next to my best friend. Sand is a bright guy and has barely shown his sadness. It's my first time witnessing it. This is what an explosion looks like, huh?

"You don't have to tell me now. Whenever you're ready." I'll stay beside him until things get better.

"Love fucking sucks." There it is. Brace yourself for the impact because he's about to gush.

"It might not be that bad."

"It sucks. It fucking hurts. Do you know what I found on my phone?"

"W...what is it?" I ask, patting his shoulder in consolation.

"P'Waan is cheating on me."

"But you're not dating her."

"Yeah. I'm not the only one she's talking to."

"It could be a misunderstanding."

"Wow, the third-year prince tagged her in their couple photo. What am I supposed to think?"

"They could be friends."

"If you see the photo, you'll know they're not. Wait. Wait!" Sand goes to someone's Facebook account on his phone and holds it out to me, pouting, on the verge of tears.

I look at the tagged photo. Sand was right. The closeness, the smiling faces, and the huge bouquet in the girl's arms convince me their relationship is everything but platonic.

Fuck, I have to prepare some sad songs for my friend.

"I should've known I wasn't the only one."

"Have you asked her before coming to the conclusion?" I don't want to assume things since it might not be what it seems.

"That's unnecessary."

"You're acting like a male lead in a drama. If it's not what it seems, it'll be your loss."

"No way. Right now... I need time to move on." Sure, okay.

I woke up to this confusing situation. Now I'm perplexed by my friend jumping to this conclusion. Well, this situation is like rapids. There's no use in wading against them. I can only stay by his side.

The gloomy atmosphere lasts until noon.

Sand retells the sorrowful story to the other guy in our gang. I feel sorry for Pipo for having to nod along to whatever Sand says and that we have to listen to the same sad story over and over until my ears go numb.

You'd be better off doing stand-up comedy. You'd excel in it.

"Love is never beautiful. This happened to me before. Look at my face! How could girls dump a good looking guy like me?"

"Calm down." I wish to tell him looks aren't everything.

Sand is incredibly handsome and quite popular among the freshmen. But he never cared, set on hitting the older girl, the Nursing Princess, chasing after a girl out of his league without fear of a heartbreak.

Look at him now, getting hurt more than anyone.

"You'll find someone to heal your heart."

"I'm done. I'm serious with her."

"Yeah." I listen well, just using my ears and nodding my head.

"Whatever. I'd better be hurt now than getting dumped later."

"..."

"Be careful, all of you. Aiming for those out of our league will only hurt us," Sand harps on. "They have options. They can choose no matter how good looking, smart, and rich those people are. We suck."

"What a fucking loser," Pipo says after some time, taking a bite of his food.

"Po, you only care about plushies. You wouldn't understand."

"Why wouldn't I?"

"You've never been in my situation. It hurts to get your heart broken by someone you love dearly."

"You weren't even dating her. How could she break your heart?"

Ouch! Sad but true. Just don't fist fight in the cafeteria, that would be embarrassing.

"I gave her my heart," Sand quavers.

"Have you asked if she wanted to give her heart to you?"

"..."

"Damn, what's with you being hurt like this? Why does Arm have to tend to you like this? Don't you feel bad for him?"

"I think you two should calm down."

"..."

“Every problem has a solution,” I say, though the anxiety has kicked in.

Sand is right. Love can hurt us.

The risk is higher when you fall for someone with options. If they find someone better and leave you behind, you’ll be the one getting hurt.

You’ll be like Sand, whining, not eating, losing yourself.

It makes me think of myself...

I have no intention of making it all about Arc and me. However, since his confession, there has always been a part of me wondering if he’s actually into someone like me, who is neither more special than anyone nor confident in himself. That feeling escalates every time he’s with someone more suitable.

A lot of people are chasing after Arc. He’s even stumbled across someone with all the amazing qualities. What would my future be like with him?

Would I be heartbroken like Sand is right now?

Sexuality is not a major concern. When I first heard he fell for me, a boy, I was taken aback but not disappointed. Arc is still Arc. It doesn’t feel like a big deal. I don’t care.

I’m not afraid to be called gay...

My parents are the same. They didn’t raise me to be someone else. They raised me to be me, someone who is true to himself.

Those things aren’t the problem. I was about to open my heart and accept his feelings for me, but I forgot to think of the possible outcomes.

Humans’ emotional instability.

People change. People grow. Preferences alter.

I’m not confident that Arc will always be with me. He’ll leave me someday. When that time comes, will I be hurt to lose him? And if... I take no risk and stop everything now, will I be saved from the pain in the future. I begin to get worried.

“Sand is sad, but don’t let that affect you, Arm.”

"I...I'm not affected," I argue with Pipo, startled.

"You went quiet and made a glum face."

"I was thinking of a way to cheer Sand up."

"He'll feel better. Don't overthink it."

"Trust me. I'll find someone better than P'Waan and boast to her face," the heartbroken guy proclaims.

Did love really change him? Someone who always kept his cool and was in high spirits with his friends became a totally different person after getting hurt. Can someone bring back the old Sand? This one is fucking annoying.

What about me? If love ever hurts me, will I be this annoying?

"Eat, dumbass. Quit yammering," Pipo snaps. We all munch on our food without saying anything more.

The guys have no plans today and my roommate is still woeful, so we return to the dormitory early. We have an important mission tomorrow at the department building: a big clean up before the Foundation Day. All plans to drink at the bar are inevitably canceled.

At ten, Sand goes to bed, earlier than usual, since he can't text the girl like before. Unable to sleep, I tiptoe to Pipo's room. His roommate is at the internet café tonight. The coast is clear.

"Did the troublemaker fall asleep?" People shoots the question, on the bed with his laptop. He scoots for me right away.

"Yeah."

I lie down on the mattress, casually set by my best friend's pillow under my head, and hug one of his plushies to ease my nerves.

"Hang in there. He'll feel better soon."

"I guess so. I'm not annoyed, though. I understand." Love can be good and bad. Sometimes we're just not capable of containing our feelings. "Hey."

"What?" Pipo asks, looking at me, fixing his gaze on the laptop screen.

"What if...hypothetically speaking."

"It's always about you when you say that." Ouch! This motherfucker is onto me, but I won't admit it.

"It's not about me. It's a movie. The character makes a confusing decision."

"When did you watch the movie?"

"A while ago. Not the point."

"Ah, okay. Go ahead."

"Well... if you liked someone who's surrounded by tons of people and you felt like you weren't that special, would you still like that person?" I ask, I'm unable to keep it inside.

"Yeah," replies Pipo, almost immediately.

"Even though you knew you weren't on par with anyone?"

"Did that person like me? If they did, I'd fight for them."

"How can you be sure they would love you forever? There wouldn't be something like a breakup otherwise."

"You care about that?"

"Of course. If one day they lost feelings and left you drowning in sadness, would you be okay with that?"

"Yeah." I'm not sure anymore if Pipo is listening since he locks his eyes on the laptop screen. I want to kick him off the bed. Instead of pressing him, I stay quiet. "Actually..."

Here it is, his artistic thoughtfulness.

"Actually, what?"

"Wouldn't you have any courage?" asks Pipo.

"To do what?"

"To risk it. If it turns out well, that's good. If it sucks, you'll learn."

“Learn the pain, like Sand? You think that’s a good idea? He’s changed a lot since he got heartbroken.”

“It’s called growth. The pain will help you grow.”

“Why are you talking sense today?”

“I’ve always been this way. You’re just an idiot.” Fuck you. “I know you’re worried about something else.”

“A...About what? It’s nothing. I’m just figuring out the other possibilities of the movie.”

“I’ve found you a possibility.”

Upon saying that, Pipo hands his laptop over.

“I asked him.”

“...!!” The laptop screen displays a conversation between Pipo and the person I’m constantly thinking of, the one that made me worry about the future, Arc...

Arc usually refuses to accept anyone’s friend requests on social media, but Pipo and Sand are the exceptions. They were elated when the Superior Prince accepted their requests recently. Who would’ve thought they would get to secretly talk to their idol?

About me.

I skim the conversation to find out it’s about my worry. But wait. Pipo couldn’t just copy and paste my words.

“What the fuck did you tell him?”

“You were wondering, and I provided you with the answer.”

“But I asked you. I didn’t tell you to ask P’Arc.”

“Read it. He answered your question.” Pipo switches the topic to save himself. I point at his face threateningly before sitting cross-legged.

I stare at the moving dots on the screen as someone is typing. The message is soon sent.

Anol Paraminphisan

Arm.

Shit!! He knows I'm reading. The Superior Prince is too impressive.

Not replying, I wait for him to continue. He probably knows my head is too blank to come up with any words.

Anol Paraminphisan

Are you worried? It's okay to be worried.

What if I ask you back? You don't have to answer. I just want to ask.

If you knew one day you'd be hurt because we didn't work out

Would you still date me?

I don't know. I don't know the answer. I don't know how I feel. I just know I care about him so much, but I'm scared. If I lost him one day, would I be able to become my old happy self?

Anol Paraminphisan

If the answer is no

I'd never be in your future memories

And you'd never be in mine

Wouldn't that be sad

It would be. In happy or sad times, cheeky or lovely, I hope he's in my future memories.

But if the pain was promised I would...

Before the answer forms in my mind, another message pops up. At that moment, Arc makes me want to cry.

Anol Pramiphisan

I'd be sad if you weren't in my future memories. Don't forget...

One part of a human's worth is the ability to have memories.

I throw my fear in the air. After talking to my third-year peer mentor, my thoughts have changed. I wish to face it, take risks and accept many more things. Though not all, I can move forward step by step.

Sand looks slightly better than yesterday. He's stopped whining. He woke up early, showered, brushed his teeth, and put on the workshop shirt that he often claimed looked good on him. Sand stands in front of the mirror for a while before spinning around to grab his backpack and leading me out to have breakfast.

We have a department activity in the evening. As I mentioned, the Foundation Day of our department is in two days. All freshmen have been called to carry out a big clean up.

The engineering department is massive with lots of separate buildings. Not to mention the packed activity area full of trash. The freshmen must take care of everything. We're divided into groups to sweep the floor, throw away the trash, clean the pool, and scrub the Gear Space. Even the department gear sign must be polished for the important day.

Everywhere is bustling with activities. My job is to clean the department sign with a group of students. As a tough guy, Pipo was tasked with clearing the water lizards out of the pool. Sand has to climb up the scaffold to dust off cobwebs in the IE workshop room. Everyone is working hard.

"Sophomores, a meeting in front of the student association! Hurry up!" shouts a senior. The second-year students rush there instantly.

"Don't slack off, freshmen."

"Yesssssss!"

"Keep an eye on them, juniors. Help them where you can. Hey, sophomores, where are you going? Come on," the head yells, his throat dry. Yeepoon just ran to me and complained about how the sophomores had to arrange the clothes, decorate the pedestal trays, prepare food for the monks, and more. Therefore, I don't dare to grumble about my job.

"Arm, your shirt is wet. Why don't you take it off?"

I shift my eyes from the older guy to my shirt. Right. Less than five minutes into washing the department sign, I've managed to soak half my workshop shirt. I quickly doff it and hang it on the branch next to the other guys' shirts.

Fortunately I am wearing a black tee today. It won't look terrible if stained.

It's time for the engineering servants to get to work. I scrub the sign with detergent and bleach, which barely work, especially on the rusty gears. It takes us forever to thoroughly clean it. It's already seven.

Let's go get our food at the student association and help the guys clean the pool."

"Sure." We have another project after a break. I follow my best friend to help Pipo and the gang clean the pool. Once done, we're all drenched. We attend the big meeting of our year before splitting up. I come back to the tree to retrieve my workshop shirt, but it's no longer there.

"Wait. Guys, have you seen my shirt?" I ask in worry.

All my friends have gotten their shirts. It means someone must've accidentally taken mine. They must have it. I just don't know who has it.

"No."

"I hung it here."

"I saw it then. I have no clue now."

"Oh."

"Ask the student association or a sophomore. They might have it."

"Okay. Thanks a lot."

I head to the student association without a second thought only to receive the same answer, "No."

I thought someone kept it for me. Now I get more nervous. It's Arc's shirt. What will I do if I lose it?

"Hey, Arm, let's go." Sand, Pipo, and our dorm mates catch up with me after completing their tasks.

"You guys go first. I lost my workshop shirt."

"Huh?"

"I hung it on a tree, but it wasn't there when I came back. No one saw it when I asked."

"We'll help you look for it."

"It's all right. You guys go first. See you at the dorm."

"You sure?"

"Yeah. It's no big deal."

"Call us if you can't find it. We'll ask on the engineering page."

"Okay." My friends are exhausted from all the labor. I don't want them to be stressed out over this trivial matter. As for me, I'll keep looking. When I discover who took my shirt, I'll curse them to get Fs on all subjects.

Starting over, I ask everyone walking by until I step into the third-year students' territory. They're splitting after helping the second-year students finish their tasks.

"Arm."

FWIP!!

All eyes are on me.

"Hello Kitty Arm."

"This boy?"

What's with them?

The crowd stirs all over the area. I scratch my head in confusion before someone drags me to the table on the side of the activity area.

"What's the matter?" They're my third-year peer mentor's friends. Arc is not here, though.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm looking for my workshop shirt. I lost it while cleaning."

"Well, you didn't take good care of it," Pond scolds. There's absolutely no need for him to say that. I feel terrible now.

"I didn't think someone would take it. It's not even new." The shirt passed on from the Superior Prince. The color has faded. The thief is a damn idiot.

Among all the freshmen's freshly bought workshop shirts, they took mine? Dumbass.

"Did you see it anywhere?" I ask.

"The shirts look all the same. How could we have spotted it?"

"Ugh." I definitely can.

"Don't be upset. Buy a new one," Copp suggests, jumping to the last solution. As I said, I could only buy a new shirt if the lost one wasn't Arc's. I took great care of it and got attached.

"I don't want to."

"What will you do? You lost it." I pout, about to cry.

"I... I have no money."

"It's just a few hundred."

"Yeah. I don't have that." It's just an excuse.

"I'll buy you one. Let's place your order at the student association."

"No."

"You refuse to do anything... what do you want, nong Arm?"

"I want my old shirt back."

"It's no use whining to us. How about this? I'll lend you mine. Give it back when you find yours," Copp offers. He removes his navy workshop shirt and shoves it in my hand. I wish to decline, but the situation forces me to shut up.

"I..."

"Take it."

I drop my gaze to the shirt in my hand downheartedly. But wait...

I flip it over and over. The stain and scent indicate this is not Copp's shirt but Arc's. Don't underestimate me. This is Arc's new workshop shirt. I remember all the details.

"This is not yours." I lift it. Copp argues immediately.

"It's mine."

"It's P'Arc's."

"Mine."

"No."

"Arm, you're nuts."

"I remember his smell and this stain here. This is P'Arc's shirt."

"Damn, are you his guardian angel? How observant."

"..."

"Yeah, it's Arc's. I was just messing with you. To my surprise, you sure know a lot about him." Fuck, I'm in trouble. I shouldn't have said that. Arm, you fucking idiot.

"I...I saw it often. Why wouldn't I know?"

"Good. Use it for now."

"What will P'Arc wear if I take it?"

"You care?"

"No." I glance around and switch the topic, "Where's my peer mentor, by the way?"

"He left."

"Oh, why didn't he get his shirt?"

"He forgot it. If you're not going to wear it, return it to him."

"I suppose so."

I call the Superior Prince as soon as I separate from those guys. Arc tells me to bring his shirt to his place and I completely forget my lost one.

Knock, knock, knock.

It takes me a while to arrive at the apartment. Arc opens the door a brief moment after the knocks. He looks at me from head to toe and tugs my hand inside.

"Why are you soaked?" He reprimands me. Is he my peer mentor or my father?

"It's unavoidable when scrubbing the department sign." Seeing Arc's intimidating face, I change the topic, "Here's your shirt. How could you forget it? It's important."

"Thanks." He accepts the shirt and hangs it over the chair at the desk.

“And...”

“Take off your shirt.” Crap!

“What did you say?”

“You’re all wet. Do you want to get sick?”

“I’m very strong.”

“You’re so naughty that I feel like hitting the backs of your knees with a thin branch.”

Daaaamn, he’s scarier than my mother. “Why are you pouting? Go take a shower.”

“I didn’t bring any clothes.”

“I have lots. Go.”

“Okaaaaay.” At a loss of what to say, I head to his closet and grab a towel, casual tee and shorts, then proceed to the bathroom.

The water from the showerhead refreshes my body. I love being under the showerhead and getting lost in my train of thought. I didn’t expect it would be ruined by the knocks on the door.

“Arm.”

“Yes?”

“Open the door.”

“W...What? Hey, hold on. I’m showering.”

“Open-the-door.” The stress of each word makes me unable to refuse.

“Is it urgent?”

“Open the door.”

“Okay, okay.” How demanding. Look at me. My body is covered in shower cream bubbles. Why does it have to be now?

I slide the glass door, tiptoe across the tiles and open the door slightly, just enough for my head to fit through.

“What’s the matter?”

“Did you leave your shirt at the department building? My friends found it and returned it just now.” Arc raises my workshop shirt, which exhilarates and frightens me at the same time.

“They found it? Thank you so much. I’ll be out soon.”

“Arm.”

“Waaaaaaaah, I was wrong for not taking care of it.”

No excuses could save me because Arc bursts the door open and steps inside with intimidation. Startled, I rush back to the shower stall with one hand over my private part and the other sliding the glass door shut. But Arc is faster, he enters the stall and pushes me against the wall.

“Don’t be mad at me. L...Let’s talk it out nicely.”

Arc places the workshop shirt on the shower cream shelf and sets his other hand on my shoulder. He doesn’t squeeze it or hurt me, yet my legs go weak. I fall onto the floor.

“I’m not nice.” The tall guy squats and holds my gaze in silence.

“P’Arc, it’s wet here. You’ll get wet. G...Get out.”

“You think I’m scared of water?”

“Waaaaah, spare me.” I’m in such a pitiful state, plopping on the floor with bubbles all over my body and my hands covering my crotch the best I can. What an unfortunate day.

“Beg. I might spare you.”

“I’ll never mess with you again,” I say meekly. Arc narrows his eyes in skepticism and it flutters me even more. “P’Arc...”

“You think you can do that?”

“I...I’m your good boy?”

“What does a good boy do?”

“Make a stupid face at you.”

“You brat.”

“Whooooa, how could you call me that?”

"You're a pain in the ass, a crybaby, a troublemaker, but you're fucking cute. Really cute."

BOOM! It's like Arc carries a lighter everywhere. Sometimes he says things casually, but to a listener like me, he has released continuous fireworks in my head, emptying all thoughts.

"Do you trust me?" asks the tall guy. Not understanding what it means, I shake my head. "Are you scared?"

"Yeah..."

"I'm not going to do anything. Give me your hand."

"You think I'm a dog?" I ask, on the verge of tears. For fuck's sake.

"You'll be anything you want. Didn't you say you're a good boy?" Arc extends his hand. After a moment of hesitation, I place my hand on his palm. However...

"No. The other hand."

Wah~~~~ My other hand is covering my private part.

"No."

"Arm."

"P'Arc... I'm embarrassed. No good."

"Nong Arm, give me your hand. Good boy."

"I'll be a naughty boy now."

"Are you no longer afraid of me? Very well. I'm a patient person. I can wait all night."

Give me more options, will yoooooou? What a demanding jerk. How am I supposed to refuse when he's squatting here, pressuring me? I muster the courage to lift my hand and put it on his palm.

"D...Don't be mean to me."

"Don't be scared. I'll never be mean to you." He leans his handsome face closer and suddenly kisses me.

We kissed once. Even so, I'll never get used to it no matter how many times. His warmth, his demanding tendency, and everything that is him, I can never get used to. And yet... It feels wonderful.

I part my lips compliantly as he pushes his tongue in, intertwining our fingers together. Arc uses the chance to lower his other hand to my waist, the touch so soft and ticklish that my body quivers and tenses.

His hot tongue explores my mouth so naturally that I almost choke on the gentleness. Our bodies get closer. We exchange our breath for a while before Arc withdraws his lips to allow me to gasp for air.

But not for long. A second later, he licks my lips and sucks them gently, then he slips his tongue into my mouth again. It touches mine as if to exchange everything. He's mine, and I'm his. We belong to each other...

Arc is the leader, and I'm the follower. He kisses me, swapping our sweetness in our mouths. When it feels like I'm floating, he pulls away and brings me back to earth. He now kisses my forehead, the tip of my nose, and other parts of my face before coming back to my lips. Over and over...

One of us will go crazy.

"Hic...P...P'Arc..." My body twitches at the touch. Arc moves his hand from my waist to my crotch and holds my private part in his large palm.

He's messing with me. He's messing with me. Waaaaaaaaaah.

"Arm."

"This is not good."

"Have you been frustrated?"

"..."

"Arm." I nod this time. Living in the dormitory, I found it impossible to think about sexual things, and it made me frustrated at times.

“Don’t be scared. Don’t be...” His voice is soft in the air as we’re enveloped in the pleasant shower cream scent. My body goes weak. I flutter my eyelids at the guy before me with inexplicable feelings.

“Hic...hmm...don’t move your hand.”

“Relax.”

“It feels weird. It’s not the same. It’s...” His touch is different from all my experiences. I’m fucking stupid at this kind of thing.

“Take a deep breath.”

“I’ll do it myself. I can do it. You...go wait outside.”

“I’m annoyed with this crybaby.” Robbing me of the chance to argue, Arc seals my lips with his again. This time it lasts so long that I have no strength to talk back.

His large hand around my private part gradually kneads it, hard and softly, arousing me at first before showing me gentleness with the slow movements.

I curl my toes over the tile floor. His fondling hand sends a tingling sensation to my stomach, and I squirm in being stimulated. My body is filled with electric shocks, quivering and spasming constantly because of his palm.

Arc recedes. He squeezes our clasped hands while moving his other hand up and down patiently.

“Mmm...” I try my best to stifle my voice, but he scolds me and moves faster.

“Cry out, Arm.”

“Ah~~~”

My panting echoes in the bathroom. I close my eyes, letting tears trickle down helplessly. Arc showers my eyelids with kisses before asking me in a level voice. “Open your eyes, good boy.”

It feels like my head is stuffed in heat so intensely that it fails to process anything. It takes time to do as told.

"Who are you seeing?"

"You?"

"What's on my face?"

"You're...smiling."

"Right. Then why are you crying?" I quickly shake my head.

"I...I feel frustrated and...good."

"I also feel good, then my good boy should listen to me, okay?"

"Okay."

"Can you lean your back against me?"

"Mm," I reply despite having zero strength. Arc positions me in his embrace and his warmth calms my fuzzy mind. I'm ready to accept everything he's going to offer.

He wraps his large hand around my not fully erected part and starts moving again. This time is both rough and uncomfortable. The quickening pace makes my thighs tremble and my private part harden. The rubbing sound between his palm and my lower part echoes in my ear. The slippery water and bubbles smoothen the movements.

"P'Arc, I can't...No..." My words are indecipherable after he moves quicker and so fervently that an embarrassing moan escapes my mouth.

Holding me, Arc stimulates all my senses. My erected part is wet. The peculiar feeling strikes again with the white light flashing before my eyes.

"I'm coming, P'Arc, I can't take this..."

Hundreds of fireworks go off, dispersed in the air. My blurry vision blackens, my body twitching countless times. Short of breath, I gasp for air as if I've never known how to breathe.

I feel him shifting before he kisses my temple with his perfectly shaped lips and speaks in a familiar low voice.

"Are you a dirty boy?"

I gaze down at my lower part and his hand, embarrassingly smeared with white liquid.

“Waaah, I...I’m sorry.”

“Now I have to clean you up. So annoying.”

I’m annoyed with you sometimes as well. You’ve exhausted me so much that I can’t move. So annoying.

I can’t face Arc. Seriously, how am I supposed to? He just did something unspeakable to me in the bathroom.

Due to his demand, I stay over for the night. The tall guy allows me to sleep peacefully without doing anything. Regardless, I hate that my face flushes every time our eyes meet.

Today, once he’s given me a ride to the dormitory, I plan to avoid him for the time being. I can’t help it. This is not good for my heart.

“How was the night with my idol?” Sand greets in the morning. To my surprise, he looks livelier than usual, completely different from yesterday.

“Good...” I remain vague. “What about you? Not heartbroken anymore?”

“Yeah.”

“You’ve moved on fast.”

“No. Well...She called me last night.”

“What?”

“Well,” Sand says, poking his fingers together. Does he think that’s cute? Ugghh. “She said she was worried because I suddenly disappeared.”

“Isn’t she dating someone else?”

“Well...Well...That’s not P’Waan’s boyfriend. They’re friends as you’ve said. Hehe.”

Hehe, my ass!!

What did I listen to him harping on about his broken heart and comfort him for? Are Pipo and I worthless? Sand’s grinning face urges me to nearly kick his ass.

“So? Did Po know?” I ask in irritation.

"I'll ask her to be my girlfriend tomorrow. I think Pipo has slammed his head against the wall to death. Go check on him."

"He got aggravated because of you. You check on him. I'll get dressed for class."

"Wait for me."

"Hurry up! You're so annoying!"

"Well, I'm in love. Hehehehehe." Go giggle away from me.

Liveliness has been bestowed upon the engineering folks again. We enjoy the morning classes and have lunch together like usual. Everything is the same, but the food somehow tastes more delicious. Sand is back in love, and Pipo is happy about his hunt for plushies from a new claw machine.

As for me... you know.

I'm fucking shyyyyyyyyyy!

I pray I won't run into Arc today. He usually disappears, so please do. I have no idea how to act next to him.

"Guy said the professor left the materials at the copy shop. Pipo and I will get them. You go submit our assignments," Sand sums up our duties, smiling. I can't say I'm in a good mood like him.

"Okay. Where's Mr. Youngyut's office?"

"Either at the Mechanical or Civil Engineering Building. One of those."

"Very helpful." We usually hand in our assignments to the section president. But this time we're late because Sand was too heartbroken to work, so we have to submit them ourselves. And I don't even know where each professor's offices are.

"Just ask someone."

"Yeah."

I ask the section president and head to the office once I get the answer to deliver these assignments before the afternoon class begins.

“Arm.” Oh, it’s Jet.

“Hey.”

“What are you doing here?”

“Submitting Mr. Youngyut’s assignments.”

“Oh.”

“What about you?”

“Meeting with my secret lover.”

“You piece of shit.” Jet bursts out laughing in satisfaction. The angel gear code is something else. Everyone is unhinged except for me.

“Let me breathe in the air without my girlfriend.”

“I’ll tell P’Yeepoon.”

“Yeepoon doesn’t mind me having a secret lover.” What the heck? “What about you? When will you date someone?”

“Why do you ask? You know there’s no one for me.”

“You think I’ll believe your pretentious ass? Get out of our gear code.”

“No. Where else would I find free food?” Jet smiles brightly and ruffles my hair. Why are my peer mentors always messing with my hair?

“Arm, I know what you’re worried about. Life is short. Go for it.”

“You know? How can you know? I’ve never told you.”

“You’re worried about Arc. More importantly, you’re so scared of him.”

“As if. Come on. Who’s scared? You got it all wrong?”

“What would you do if Arc was here?”

“I’ll backhand him.”

“Don’t take back your words. Be honest with your feelings. I’m off.”

“Oh you’re leaving? Bye. See you next meal.”

“I have no money to treat you anymore. See you next semester.” Jet pushes my head before walking off. I have to style my hair again. So annoying.

My mission to hand in the assignments resumes. I ascend the stairs, recalling the office is on the third floor. I have no idea where CE3108 room is, though. I keep walking until I stumble across a pack of wild dogs!!

Shit. Another battle awaits. The third-year civil engineering students swarm in front of the room. I remember Copp’s voice and face, remarkably recognizable.

What should I do? If I go down the stairs and go up on the other side, I still won’t be able to avoid them because room 3108 is only two doors down.

Eventually, I brave up and quickly march over, hoping the guys won’t greet me and just ignore me. Unfortunately...they greet me with the rest of the guys’ haunting voices chiming in.

I have no clue what I did, but I don’t really know how to act.

“Nong Arm, cutest boy.”

“The Liverpool boy is here. See you next game at the bar.”

“Fucking cute.”

I wish I could rush past the crowd as fast as possible, but the guys block my way.

“What are you doing here, Arm?” one of them asks.

“Submitting the assignments.”

“Hello Kitty boy!!”

“Where’s Arc? Ai’Arccccccc!”

“Wait, Arm. Stay here. I have something to tell you. Arc is actually going to conf...”

All noises quieten startlingly.

Because someone appears behind me and covers my ears with both hands. He pushes my feet to keep me walking forward amid the constant teasing.

I don’t know what the third-year guys are trying to reveal, and the warmth erases the topic from my mind.

“Wait. We’re past the office.” We’re far from the room before I know it.

“Do it later.”

I’m right. This is Arc’s voice. When I’m about to spin out of his arms, he locks me in place. Unyielding.

“Let me go.” No one is nearby, but our positions look funny.

“Let’s stay like this until the guys finish blabbering.” The distant voices continue, seemingly just laughter. I don’t know what’s so entertaining. They’ll get scolded if a professor shows up.

“What did they say?”

“Why do you need to know?” Even though his hands over my ears compromise my hearing, I can make out his voice.

“You’re toying with me. I’m nosy.”

“It’s about you. They were just talking about you.”

“Yeah...?” My heart is melting again.

“They said you’re cute.”

“Ah...”

“Why don’t you stay over at my place tonight?”

“Wait, wait. No.” I turn to tell him off, but he keeps me in the same position.

“Can I kiss you, then?”

“No.”

“Let me kiss your head.”

“No.” I glance up at the tall guy and say firmly, “I can’t hear your friends anymore. Will you let go of me now?”

Not waiting for me to repeat, Arc releases me and we face each other. I know my face must be red down to my neck, feeling the heat in my body.

“I...I have to submit the assignments.”

"I'll hand them in for you. To whom?" Arc volunteers. And I accept it because I don't wish to return there and get teased by his friends.

"Mr. Youngyut."

"Wait here. You have afternoon classes, right? I'll walk you there."

"But it's far. Our buildings are soooo far from one another."

"Yeah. Wait here."

"Don't you have class?"

"The professor didn't come." Not letting me argue, Arc jogs to the office and quickly comes back.

"Let's go." he speaks in an even voice.

We use the skywalk to get to the electrical engineering building. We both stay quiet, unlike before. Why? Perhaps it's the strange relationship that can't be defined as bromance.

"Was yesterday bad?" Here we go.

"Don't asssssssssk."

"I need to know."

"It wasn't bad. Just don't bring it up."

"It'll be tougher than that. I'm a beast in bed."

"I hate you." Will I be able to handle that? I almost died in the bathroom yesterday.

"I won't do it if you don't want to."

"As if you'd listen."

"I would. Doing it or not, it's up to you." I hope the skywalk is ten times longer.

"Aren't you sad that you fell for someone like me? You could find someone better."

"Don't you know you're cute?"

"..."

"Don't you know someone is head over heels for you?"

"Nonsense."

“Arm, I’m not special like you think and not superior to everyone.”

“You’re superior and more special.”

“I’m just a normal person who loves you.”

“ ... ”

“If I’m special, don’t you know that you’re also special to me?”

Chapter 16

Meet the Quota of Being a Dumbass

“The guys are moving out of the dorm. What do we do?”

Sand starts a conversation in the morning with the hot topic. He’s been uneasy for nearly a week since one of us daringly secretly transferred his stuff out to an apartment.

The first-year students are required to stay in the dormitory for a year, but they’re already losing patience in the first semester.

We didn’t fight or anything. The guys just love to party. As you can see, engineering students are spotted only in a few places, and one of them is the bar. Since it would be inconvenient to return to the dorm after a long night, they rented apartments as a solution.

“I don’t know. I have to ask my parents first.” I barely visit home. If I ask them for an apartment, my father might hit me with a hanger.

“My peer mentor recommended a place. It’s super nice, perfect to have fun.”

“Really? What did Po say?”

“Come on, he’s already packing up.”

“What’s the rush?” I mutter, unserious. “I think it’s better to move out before we start our second year. Things will fall into place by then.”

“Sounds good. For the freedom of the freshmen.”

“ ... ”

“And if P’Waan agrees to be my girlfriend, it’ll be easier to spend time with her.”

“Yeah, whatever you say.”

“You’ll also get to spend time with P’Arc late at night.” That jolts me. My face flushes, my ears redden.

“W...What does P’Arc have to do with this? I hardly spend night time with him. You’re talking nonsense.”

“Yeah, yeah. Why so flustered?”

“I’m not.”

“Mmmmm, whatever. Tell me when you’re ready.”

My cheeky roommate hops out of bed and dashes into the bathroom. Our morning routines are repetitive: showering, getting dressed, having breakfast at the dormitory cafeteria, and attending our boring classes. The difference today is the last three exam results that will define our fate.

This is definitely my dayyyyy. I’m not top of the section, but all my scores are satisfactory. I can even call my father to ask for more money since I’m a great student with no cash.

As if knowing all exam results of freshmen are out, Yeepoon quickly sets a meeting for the angel gear code to celebrate. Don’t forget our bet. The loser will pay for the meal. I even laid another bet with Arc.

“Nong Arm is hereeeeeeeeeeee,” my second-year peer mentor greets me the second I enter the restaurant.

“Hi, P’Yeepoon. Hi, P’Jet,” I greet them with my hands folded over my chest. When I noticed the other guy in his seat, I bow a little and greet him cheekily, “Hey, bro.”

“You brat.” His answer implies his adoration for me.

“I’m not a fan of Manchester United. How can you call me a brat?”

“You messing with me?”

"Oooh, I'm scared."

"You guys are always bickering. Let's order some food." Yeepoon ceases the battle once again while Jet just smiles. What's with him? Is he high?

"Go ahead." Arc tosses the menu to me. As I view it quietly, Jet gets to the point.

"The loser pays."

"Wow, who could it be?" I mumble in amusement. Undoubtedly it's not me. "I'll have this."

"Okay. Fish steak for Arm. With pasta?"

"No, thanks. I don't want to empty the loser's wallet. I feel bad."

"You're confident, huh?" says the third-year guy with a sly face.

"Well, yes, I am."

How strange. When we're all together, I have two contradicting feelings. One, I can truly be myself and feel comfortable with it the way I rarely am with others. At the same time, I sometimes get nervous next to him. Like...

When we're alone or when he touches me. It's impossible to stay sane in those situations.

"What about you, P'Arc?" asks Yeepoon.

"The same as Arm."

"Copycat." I can't help but taunt him.

"Annoying."

"I'll tell my dad."

"I dare you to call him now. I'll talk to him myself."

"You call Mr. Rungson. I want to ask why his son is such a jerk."

"You want to speak with my dad?"

With a serious voice and gaze, Arc is ready to call his father with his phone in his hand. So, I...

"A...Ah, I'm just kidding. P'Arc...I'm sorry. I didn't mean to." I'm scared.

“Why apologize. My dad is your dad. You can talk to him.”

Whoooooa, does he treat his father like a friend? Why would I dare?

“Call him later when you have time. Now, please pay attention to me and Poon. Damn, do you guys even see us? Let’s go to the reg website to find the loser,” the oldest guy stops us. The problem is the prince-princess couple always has to step in, and I can’t help wondering if they’ve ever considered cutting me off for being a pain in the ass.

We glue our eyes to our phones as we access the reg website. Our traditions make no sense, just an excuse to have free food. We’re going to select our highest scores and calculate the average scores. The one with the highest point is the winner.

“I beat P’Jet. Wooooo!” Yeepoon is in the lead. “Nong Arm, show us yours.”

“Here it is.”

“Whoa. I lost to you. How could you do this well? I expected lower than this.” Huh? Yeepoon! I would’ve cursed her hadn’t she been nice to me.

“My score is as good as my looks.”

“Gotta give it to you. Arc, show us your scores.” The tall guy, saying nothing, slides his phone to the center of the table, revealing his scores in all subjects.

Holy shit! He’s smart.

“I’m two points short in this subject,” Arc says plainly. At that moment, an invisible knife pierces through my heart.

“What the hell? You can’t just slap us like that! Ugghh!”

Not listening to Yeepoon, I think back to the day we laid a separate bet to make the loser pay. Well, even if I’m not last in the gear code, I still have to spoil my third-year peer mentor.

“I lost this time. So, Poon, Arm, Arc, free food for you guys today!”

“Yeah!”

We’re all having fun, chattering away while waiting for the food. Soon later, the guy beside me leans closer and whispers in my ear.

"You know what the loser has to do, right?"

"I know. I'll treat you to something," I reply immediately.

"See you tomorrow evening."

"Okay. What do you have in mind?"

"You choose."

"Ice cream, then."

"Why ice cream?"

"I want to eat ice cream."

"What a fucking brat."

"Oh, watch your mouth, or you won't get to have free ice cream. I'm not as nice as you think."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Really?"

"Y... Yeah." My heart races as he stares at me. I thought I was sharp-tongued, but Arc's attack has me dying. I chow down my fish steak quickly, waiting for him to stop ruining me with his actions.

The next day in the evening, I have a date that can't be canceled. Even if I died, my soul would float back here as the Superior Prince wished. Arc picks me up at the dormitory before we head to a famous homemade ice cream shop near the university.

"What do you want? I'll order it," asks the tall guy after we settle at a table in a corner.

"You order it. You're the winner."

"Just choose. Hurry up."

"Can I have this set? I can choose the flavors of the ice cream." I point at the menu.

Arc tells me off loudly. "You want to burst your stomach?"

"Why not? It's my money. How can someone who's not paying say that?"

“Okay. What flavors?” Arc prepares an order note and pen. If I’m slow, he’ll scold me again. It’d be another battle before we get to enjoy the ice cream.

I quickly tell the tall guy. “Cookies and cream. It’s so good I could cry.”

“Quit blabbering and finish your order.”

“Extra whipped cream. They even have macadamias.”

“You want that?” asks Arc, looking up.

“Yes! We can get five scoops. How about every flavor?”

“Why the fuck are you so gluttonous?”

“Aw, it’s my money.”

“...”

“One chocolate. I chose cookies and cream, didn’t I?”

“I wrote it down.”

“Tiramisu and banana. What about you?”

“I’m already full, listening to you.”

“Good. I won’t have to pay for you, then.”

“You brat.”

“You can pick one flavor. Go ahead. How fucking nice of me to give you this opportunity.”

“Cookies and cream, then.” Arc says, jotting it down.

Touched, I speak without thinking. “Ooh, you like the same flavor as me.”

“It’s for you. I chose what you like.”

BOOM!! Imagine if I’m dead or alive. Arc is killing me. Probably having no clue, he passes the note to the server at the counter after writing everything, leaving me at the table with my pounding heart.

It takes me almost one minute to collect myself. Arc is back in his seat and locks his eyes on me in contemplation. I remain silent, not daring to ask. Once the huge bowl of ice cream is served, I start eating right away.

A conversation begins, of course, and it goes smoothly.

“Is it that good?”

“I’m not like you. You’re acting like you’re forced to eat.”

“I don’t want to take your food. A crybaby is annoying.” I’ve never behaved that way!

How could he say that? Bastard...

“Ha, don’t be mad if I finish all of it.”

“Eat up. You’ll be dead by tomorrow.”

“Fuck you.” I’ve tried to refrain from cussing him out, but Arc is messing with me nonstop today.

“Let me ask you something.” Here we go. How am I supposed to dodge it? Arc even props up his arms on the table and fixes his eyes on me.

“A...Ask away. B...But don’t ask me to go to your place. I’m not going!”

“Why did you jump to that? I was going to ask if you’ve ever dated anyone.” The question makes it hard to swallow the ice cream. Why did the Superior Prince ask that all of a sudden?

“What will I get from answering?”

“Nothing. But I’ll deal with you if you don’t answer.” Whoooooa, he’s fiercer than a feral dog.

“There’s one person. She’s super cute. We dated in tenth grade and broke up within that year.”

“Why?”

“She liked someone else.” It’s sad, and bringing it up hurts. I keep eating the ice cream.

“I was devastated back then. I skipped meals for three days and lost some weight.”

“You got over her.”

“I’m handsome with lots of choices. Why would I care?” Noticing Arc’s fed-up face, I drop my story and shoot him a question. “What about you? How many people have you dated?”

"What will I get from answering?" He copies meeeeeeee.

"Nothing, but I'll deal with you if you don't answer."

"Wow, I wish to be dealt with." Shit, is he afraid of me at all? "I dated two people. A puppy love like yours in high school. And one during my first year. We broke up before the second year."

"What about... a one-night stand?"

"Yes."

What did I get myself into? Arc is a playboy.

"O...Often? This is nothing. I'm just wondering."

"No. Just a few times. At the start of my second year when I was rebellious and single. I don't do that anymore," Arc stresses the last sentence as if to assure me. Well... I know now. Well, only the stupid Arm right here never knows shit.

"Who did you love the most, like...really get attached to?"

"The second one."

"Where is she now?" The more I ask, the deeper I step into the thorny bushes. It hurts, but I'm curious.

"She goes to the same university, she's dating someone."

"Did it hurt? You must've been hurt a lot. What if she comes back to you one day? If you could turn back time, would you fix it? Your love sounds deep, like...the kind of ungraspable one to me."

"Arm."

"She must be a good person, the opposite of me. How could you fall for me?"

"Are you upset?"

"I'm not." But my voice is unforgivably shaking.

"Did I like her? I did. Is she a good person? Very. Is she the opposite of you? Absolutely. Despite all of the comparisons, you're you."

“ ... ”

“Are you afraid that I’ll leave you someday? Well, I’m afraid you’ll leave me someday as well.”

“That’s not true.”

“I really like you the way you are. The way I’ve never felt. It’s different from my feelings in the past. It’s not just captivation. Sometimes I hope you’ll find someone better if you don’t choose me. I’m way beyond my selfishness.”

“I got it. What a long explanation.” I mumble, slowly absorbing every word into my heart.

“Stop overthinking it. A brat doesn’t need to think.”

He’s ridiculing me again. Is he really into me? I’m confused.

“Last question.”

“Mm.”

“Aren’t you embarrassed to tell people that you like me?” It’s not easy to admit you’re gay. It’s taking me some time to accept it. But Arc is the center of attention in our department. Will he be able to get through everything?

This is a difficult question. Arc doesn’t answer right away. He goes quiet in contemplation for a while until I get anxious.

“Well, if you...”

“I might not have been able to admit it to anyone before. But with you, I have the courage somehow.”

“ ... ”

“I love you. As simple as that.”

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! My thoughts disperse. What should I do? My hands are shaking. My lips are trembling. It’s like I’m getting electric shocks. My mind becomes a black hole. Oddly enough we keep holding our gazes without averting them.

“Arm.”

“Hmm?”

“Eat up. The ice cream is melting.”

My heart is also melting. Do you have any idea?

(The God of Fire)

“How was the ice cream with your peer mentee?”

“We ate a lot and I ended up paying. My stomach almost burst when I got home.”

“That’s not what I’m asking, I’m talking about the progress in your relationship.” Copp’s words worry me. The kid is stupid. Despite knowing how I feel, he’s still being dumb. What progress do they expect?

Moreover, I’m not the type to disclose every detail about my love life to others.

I give them a vague answer instead. “Nothing much. I’m not in a rush.”

“Ha, just admit you suck,” Pond and Bloom jeer.

“You’re so annoying. Get away from me.”

“You were born with everything, including suckiness.”

“Someone might take him if you take it slow.”

“Oh, I forgot to tell you I saw an IE student checking out your peer mentee the other day. What will you do? Someone is about to take him. Hahahahaha.” I’m fucking sick of my friends. I wish I could ignore that, but the mention of a student from another major checking out Arm always adds fuel to the fire. The flames are inextinguishable.

“What do you want me to do? I sigh, nosing to my friends’ nosiness.

“Ask him to be your boyfriend.”

“It’s too soon.”

“Wow, any slower than this and he’ll be taken. Step up your game if you want him.”

I pause to think, weighing the options in my head. It’s not like I’ve never considered it, but some things take time, though I’ve been aware of our mutual feelings for a while now.

“I’ll take care of it myself.”

“No, Arc. You sucked every time. You don’t just ask someone to be your boyfriend. It’s gotta be romantic.”

I scratch my head, perplexed by what these three pig heads are implying.

“What do I have to do?”

“We have an idea for a surprise. It’ll be a wonderful memory for you and Arm for sure.”

“All right! Do whatever you want.”

Let’s see if their plan will work...

The surprise of asking Arm to be my boyfriend begins.

While other students rest on the weekend, I must be on a mission with my proud, lousy friends. We’d planned and prepared my speech for a week before I called Arm last night to hang out with me today.

The kid hesitated at first, grumbling so much that I almost gave up.

If I’d known, I wouldn’t have yanked his workshop shirt from the tree and used it as an excuse to mess with him. The thought gives me another headache.

“Arc, I booked the final showtime tickets for you. Honeymoon seats in an empty theater. The coast is clear,” Pond emphasizes. Bloom and Copp are selecting my outfit.

What’s with all the fuss just for asking Arm to be my boyfriend? He can understand that much.

“You got what I’m saying?”

“Yeah.”

“We’ll wait for the news outside the theater.”

“I know.”

“Practice your speech one more time. What are you going to say?” My head hurts from the three-page speech Pond wrote. Considering their good intentions, I played along and memorized it like a poem.

“I remember. Quit stressing about it.”

“Okay. I wish you success, bro.”

“Yeah.”

“Good luck.”

I pick Arm up at the dormitory at eight, treat the naughty kid to a meal, and take him to the cinema at ten thirty. I let Arm get his popcorn for about ten minutes and fill my stomach with a carbonated drink before the movie finally starts.

“Why did you choose this movie?”

“Right.” I didn’t check the title. Before I knew it, I was already seated.

Suspiria. An excellent choice. Make sure to watch a horror movie when you’re going to ask your crush to date you. Those motherfuckers!

“Looks fun, though. It’s been a while since I watched this genre. How exciting,” Arm says, smiling so brightly that I’m itching to kiss him. Damn, I get turned on easily.

“I’m glad that you like it.”

“Hey, can I eat popcorn?”

“Sure, I’ll feed you.”

“Don’t joke with me. I can eat by myself. I don’t want to bother you.”

“You bother me all the time. Just eat.” The brat pouts and starts enjoying the popcorn as the movie plays.

How terrifying. The atmosphere is haunting. How am I supposed to build up the mood to confess?

I don’t know the length of the movie. I calculate the time roughly and carry out the surprise my friends have prepared for me one hour and a half in.

“Arm.”

“Hmm...”

“Since the day I met you at our first meal many things have happened. I didn’t have feelings for you back then, as I said...”

I pause, thinking of the speech written by Pond, and glance at the boy beside me to check his reaction. I expect to see his usual shy, red face, but now...

You brat.

"Waaaaaaaah." Arm puts his legs up and covers his ears with his eyes shut at the frightening scene. As for me, my mood is completely ruined.

I let Arm get engrossed in the movie until the credits roll for ten minutes before restarting my mission. This time, however, the brat speaks before I can open my mouth.

"Can we go? Right now..."

"What?" His face clouds, worrying me.

"My stomach hurts."

"How come?"

"I need to use the restroom. Go wait outside. I can't hold it anymore."

Arm darts out of the theater, leaving me in my seat in a daze. It takes me some time to gather the tiny bit of my strength and exit. My friends are waiting for good news.

"Arc, how did it go?"

"Tell us now. Did he say yes? Eeeeeek!"

"Say yes, my ass. He ran off to the restroom."

"Oh, shit."

I sit down to rest my heart. No one utters another word as they know the mission has failed. The guys pat my shoulder and leave before the troublemaker returns.

"Did you wait long? I'm sorry. I couldn't really hold it."

"Yeah. Nevermind."

"What's wrong? You look upset. Scared of ghosts?"

"Stupid."

"Aw~ Are you scared of ghosts? I can't believe the Superior Prince is scared."

"I'm not."

I'm scared of you, you son of a bitch. You're something else for making me embarrassed. This is fucking embarrassing...

"See, Edison didn't succeed in inventing a light bulb on the first try. There's a second attempt."

Loving Arm allows me to experience new things, including this.

Another disaster is impending because my lousy friends refuse to give up on the surprise.

"Arc, listen to me first. Don't make that face."

"What face?"

"Ass face."

"Fuck you."

"I'm serious now."

"What is it?"

Copp clears his throat and explains his thoughts.

It's nothing much. I'm supposed to pick Arm up and park in a fucking romantic place to confess my love. Bloom will prepare roses in the trunk while Pond and I will get a gift, either a ring or a bracelet.

Once I have time, I head to the mall as planned. I don't have a special gift in mind, but I'll choose something that catches my eye.

Everything goes smoothly until...

"P'Arc!!"

"..."

"What are you doing here?" We hardly run into each other, but Arm always shows up at bad times. I love and hate him at the same time. Arm! Damn you!

"What about you?"

"I asked you first."

“Just window shopping.”

“Here’s your purchase, sir.”

Fuck...

Upon my answer, the worker hands me a small paper bag. I accept it and walk off with the nosy and squeezable boy.

“What did you get?”

“Mind your own business,” I shoot.

“All right. I know what you bought.”

“You saw it?”

“An accessory for a girl,” says Arm, adorably frowning.

“Jealous, aren’t you?”

“Who’s jealous? I haven’t said anything. That’s bullshit.”

“What are you doing here? You haven’t told me.” I change the subject before it gets more suspicious.

“I’m studying with my friends at a café.”

“Did you eat?”

“No. I think I’ll eat with the guys.”

“Eat with me. I’m hungry.”

“Let me call Sand and Po first. They must be hungry, too.”

“Arm.”

“Give me one second.”

“Arm.”

“...”

“Can we eat alone? I want to be with you alone.”

“Okay. But let me tell them to find something to eat first. Po and Sand won’t be mad, I guess.” His voice trails off amusingly, but I keep listening.

“ .. ”

“But if I turn you down, I’ll be mad at myself for sure.”

That’s when I realize the confession plan makes me not be myself to the person I love...Everyone wants it to be special, of course, but I’ve forgotten that sometimes, you don’t wish for anything extravagant, as long as the simple things are firm and sincere.

As for me, it’s not anytime soon. It’s not time to ask Arm to date me yet...

Time flies. In two weeks, it’s the final exam.

My friends have been complaining every single day about me not asking my peer mentee to be my boyfriend yet. I didn’t procrastinate, but I’ve been looking for a chance.

I’ve spent time with Arm more often. Even though I failed to persuade him to go to my apartment to play with him I got to hold his hand and pat his head. I smelled his palm all night, inhaling his scent until morning. What a pain.

“Big game tonight. Let’s go to Bang-on Pochana.”

“Sure.”

I rarely decline their invitations and usually tag along, bringing Arm with me at times.

“Bring the troublemaker,” Copp suggests.

“I’ll ask him first. He might want to go with his friends.”

“You’re like an understanding parent, but you actually suuuuuuuck.” We’re at the marble table between buildings. Due to a class break, we found a place to chill out without wandering off.

“Hey, Arc, who’s that?” The guys jab my arms. I turn to the person on the walkway between buildings.

“Damn, he’s fucking cuteeeeeee.”

“He’s wearing a jean jacket today. So cool.”

“Cute.”

“Adorable.”

“Who does nong Arm belong to? Oh, I hear no one is hitting on him.”

“Can I hit on him, then? What a cutieeeeeee.”

“I’ll slap your teeth off! Shut up,” I yell at the giggling guys. They tease me whenever we meet up, never sparing me once from the day I took Arm’s workshop shirt at the department building to the important moment at the cinema.

Everybody from the department knows. For fuck’s sake. By the time we stop bickering, Arm is gone.

I exhale a sigh, having no idea how to ask him to be my boyfriend.

I’ve done everything in my life and never been like this with anyone. I have no clue why this kid is an exception to me. My friends would come up with shitty plans if I asked. I’d rather deal with it myself. It’s love, my attempt. That’s how I see it.

But when? I don’t know.

“Arc! Arc, come here,” my peer mentor interrupts my train of thought.

Jet stands a short distance away with his hands on his hips, not walking to the table. I drag myself to the senior, who looks too serious for me to mess with.

“What’s the matter?”

“A word.”

“What?” Let’s just talk under this tree.

“Did Poon tell you?”

“About what?”

“Arm.”

“What about him?” My body reacts harder at the mention of that name.

“Oh, aren’t you hitting on him? When will you ask him to be your boyfriend?”

“How did you know?”

“Everyone knows, Arc. You’re the one who still chills. We’ve all been waiting for months, but nothing has happened. Poon has a good plan, in case you can use it.” His smile indicates this won’t be simple.

“What plan? I’ll do it if it’s good. If it’s bad, kick her for me.”

“Just kick my face.” We’re going nowhere, messing with each other. “Let’s get to the point. Remember the cute boy page Poon is running.”

“Yeah.”

“Arm is the other admin.”

“Huh? Are you kidding? Yeepoon said the other admin quit.”

“My girlfriend lied to you. She confessed last night because she felt sorry for your loveless life.” Fuck...

Memories flash in my mind. The first time I texted Admin A. Holy shit! How didn’t I figure it out? I even expose myself with that request. It’s so embarrassing even though it was ages ago.

“Do whatever you want with that information. This is all I can do.”

“Thanks, phi.”

“Yeah. When you guys start dating, let’s celebrate with our gear code lovers.” Jet walks off, leaving me with this heavy matter.

I return to the table. Speaking to no one, I take out my phone, go to facebook and search for the familiar ‘Engineer Cute Boy’ page.

No wonder why Arm got all the privileges. Besides his cuteness, Yeepoon backs him up.

I read the past conversations in the inbox. We talked several times, from our first fight to the secret voting when he was actually the admin. What a douche.

I recall Arm has a class, so I wait. When I’m back at my apartment in the evening, overwhelmed by all emotions, I decide to text the admin, playing dumb.

Anol Paraminphisan

sent a photo

That's it. In one minute, he replies.

Engineer Cute Boy

What's the matter?

It's been a while since we posted the angel gear code.

Anol Paraminphisan

It's nothing. I just want to say that

The boy in the photo is cute

Engineer Cute Boy

🙄🙄?

An emoji, huh? This is the joy of messing with this kid. But come on, this is an important moment. Some things don't require preparations or plans. I believe my sincerity is tremendous enough to convince him, so...

Anol Paraminphisan

Arm.

I type down everything in my head into letters. Before I send the message, Arm bombards the inbox so fast that I almost throw my phone away.

Engineer Cute Boy

P'Arc, you know it's me? How?

Hey, I'm sorry

I didn't mean to lie

I was scared you'd tell me off

I'm sorry

Waaaaaaaaaah

Anol Paraminphisan

Arm.

Shit. I have to delete the message and help him pull himself together first.

Engineer Cute Boy

I'm sorry

What do you want to eat?

My treat

(ツ_<。)

Don't be quiet

It scares me. I'm dying here...

π_π

◡_◡

ಥ_ಥ

Anol Paraminphisan

I'll kick your ass

The mood is ruined. This kid is annoying as fuck. What's with him? I feel like skipping this step to stop wasting time. Stupid brat!

"Confess on IG."

Bloom says that while picking at his teeth with his legs crossed, waiting for the professor to arrive.

"What?" I ask. He shrugs, taking his damn time. I almost lose patience.

"Whoa, I teased you a little and you already got upset?" My best friend pats my shoulder and continues, "Well, you saw a lot of people confessing on IG and got an idea. Most succeeded."

"Ugh."

I wouldn't succeed. My crush is an idiot.

"It wouldn't hurt to try."

"I'll wait for Arm to ask me to be his boyfriend."

"You're joking."

"Just give it a try. If you fail, we'll think of another way. What's so hard about confessing on your personal account?" Copp chimes in.

I argue in an instant. "But I don't want anyone to pry."

"Whoa, everybody knows. You realized it too late."

"So what? Just stay away from this important moment of Arm and I." I revealed my feelings for him when it was just the two of us. I don't need people to flock around us when I ask him to be my boyfriend. I can allow my best friends but not anyone else.

I rarely show up publicly, secluding myself and staying hard to find to protect my privacy. But when I met Arm, everything changed. At least I hope we can be happy without others meddling in our relationship.

"Do it indirectly, then. No need to be straightforward. Use the language only you two understand."

I give no response but think it over.

It's going to be the final exam season in a few days. If I prolong this, we'll be too busy to spend time together. Arm will study, work on his projects, and hang out with his friends. So will I.

Then...

It's red match tonight: Man United versus Liverpool. Bang-on Pochana is bustling with customers. Arm is here with his friends at a table nearby while I drink with mine and observe the situation from afar.

"Wait, you motherfucker. Slow down. Don't do it yet. Ugghhhhhhh! Dumbass." The customers cry out when a Liverpool player misses. They start kicking the ball again.

"Come on. Will Liverpool win tonight? This reminds me of someone who always roots for losing teams," Cop laughs. Arm flips him off from his table, amusing the third-year guy.

Yeah, let him get all cocky. Half an hour later, Manchester United has the upper hand again due to the opponent's mistake.

“Oh, crap. Handball in the penalty area. That sucks.”

“We need a penalty kick!”

“What does the referee say?”

“Oh, a penalty kick. Let’s goooooo!” My friends holler. I divert my attention to the smaller guy a short distance away. Upset, he chugs down the booze nonstop. I stand up to stop him, but Pod seizes my wrist.

“Sit down. Comfort him when he loses. It’s our plan.”

I have no choice but to settle back and watch the cocky kid in worry.

“Alexis must do it.”

Phweeeeee! The whistle signals the penalty kick. Time stops when the ball soars in the air toward the net before resuming when the crowd cheers.

“Yes!! Perfect!!”

“One to zero, not from luck but from the handball. Haha.”

Lives have been lost by the time the ninety-minute match is over. One of them is Arm’s. He is sulking at the table. How am I supposed to endure that? Eventually, I walk to him.

“Stop sulking. It’s not cute.” I sit next to the smaller guy and reach out to stroke his head in consolation. Who would have thought Arm would turn his head away before I could even touch it?

“Don’t touch meeee.”

“Why not?”

“That would be a handball.”

What a pain in the ass. How can I not love him?

“I’m not a ball. Come here. You drank a lot, didn’t you? You’ll be punished.”

“What are you yammering about? So annoying.” Does he think I’ll feel bad when he pouts like that? It just makes me want to kiss him more, though I can only tap those lips gently as a punishment.

"Don't touch meeeee."

"Okay. But drink water first. You're drunk," I say, passing him a glass of water.

"I'm not drunk! I'm sad."

"About the game?"

"Yeah."

"They'll win someday. Come here. We need to talk." I grab his hand to pull him up.

"Where are we talking?"

"In my car."

"I'm not going to your place. You'll bite me."

"Okay. I'll give you a ride to the dorm. I'll take arm," I say the last sentence to his friends before bringing his limping body to my car in the parking lot.

"All right. What's your problem, hm?" I ask in adoration, stroking his head and pulling him into my embrace.

"Don't touch meeeee."

"Arm."

"It was just a brief handball. Why did they get a penalty kick? So unfair."

"Why are you so small?"

"..."

"Arm."

"Hmm..." Sometimes we don't need to wait for a chance to confess our feelings.

Sometimes I wish to do things how I like it, just like when you like someone. I just want to tell him whether he understands it or not.

"I like you."

"..."

"Will you be my boyfriend?"

"Mm..."

I laugh when the boy in my arms mumbles a response. Arm is no longer aware of his surroundings and falls asleep. Regardless of that, I'm happy to have said what I've really wanted to say.

(The God of Fire: End)

At noon, it's hell for the engineering students. The cafeteria is packed with barely any empty tables left. We also have to race against each other to get food. I feel like crying. My friends and I need to wait near the students who have almost finished their food to use the table next to finally eat.

The engineering cafeteria is the hub of all students. Students from other departments frequent here as well, divided into two groups: One, of people who look for love. Two, the engineering students' lovers.

Especially when the final exams are around the corner, the cafeteria is extremely crowded.

"Miss Wimon canceled the afternoon class. Where should we go? I'm excited," says Pipo with enthusiasm. His eyes are full of claw machines. I can see it.

"Anywhere is fine. Ask Sand. Does he have a plan with his girl?"

"P'Waan has class. We can have fun all we want."

"Accompany me to flirt with a girl at the café at the accounting building, then we'll play claw machine." Pipo concludes.

"Wait. When did you know the girl?"

"Last week. I met her at a claw machine arcade near the university and asked for her LINE ID. Hehehe." Yeah. Whatever. We engineering boys have our selling points. Some have workshop shirts. Some have gears. Pipo on the contrary, has nothing, but still thrives. Amazing.

"Arm." I shift my attention from my friends to the newcomers. It's Theme, a friend from the same department.

"Hey, what's up? You need anything?"

"P'Arc asked me to give you this." He puts a milk box on the table.

"Thanks a lot."

"You're welcome." Theme walks away. The guys and I stare at the milk box. The fastest one is the winner.

FWIP!!

Thankfully, I'm faster than these two. They would've read the note on the box otherwise.

"Ugh, what the hell? Can't you let us read it?" they grumble. I turn around in annoyance and peel the lime green note to read in silence.

'Drink a lot of milk so you can grow tall'

Fucking asshole.

This is an indirect insult. With that thought, I stride to the beverage stall and buy a box of ginkgo nut milk. I fumble for an old note in my backpack, rip it into a square and write a message.

'Drink lots of this, it's good for your brain :).'

I assume this is an equally hurtful indirect insult.

"Po, Sand, do me a favor."

"What?" they ask wearily.

"Can you deliver this to P'Arc? I don't want to see him and argue with him again."

After getting drunk the night the red batch took place and waking up in my spinning room, Arc gave me a lengthy lecture on LINE, and I told him 'I'm sorry,' several times. Unwilling to fight him in person right now, I'll send my nosy friends.

"What did you say?"

"Deliver this to P'Arc."

"Awwwww, give it. We'll go right away." They never put this much effort into studying. In a split second, Pipo and Sand sprint to the farthest corner of the cafeteria, where Arc and his friends are.

I wait in anticipation. My friends come back with a bottle of cod liver oil. Wow~ Arc went this far to insult me and even left a message.

'I'm already smart. You take a lot of this to cure your stupidity.'

That fucking hurts!

All right, then. Let me find some of your flaws.

I advance back to the store, look at all the snacks before me, pick a chocolate bar, and return to the table to write a note.

'Eat a lot of chocolate, maybe you'll talk more sweetly.'

I would've bought him a muzzle had there been one.

Pipo and Sand are excellent delivery men. They run back to the other side and come back around ten minutes later.

"P'Arc wants you there."

"What? I'm not going."

"He has something for you."

"He'll taunt me for sure." He wouldn't let me get away with my shenanigan.

I sit still without a thought of moving. Eventually, pressured by my friends, I rise and walk to my third-year peer mentor despite myself. I feel the pull with every step I take. Arc is there with his gang, his eyes fixed on me until the distance between us reduces.

"What do you want?" I act tough when my heart is actually melting.

"You damn brat."

"What? I didn't do anything. I just bought you a chocolate bar."

"All right, I ate it."

"Ooooh, so you accepted what I wrote."

"I accept everything you write. Here! This is for you." Arc passes me a book. It bewilders me because I don't study this subject.

"You misunderstood something. I don't need this book."

"You will. Remember the books I gave you. There aren't only two."

"Oh, this is the third one. Thanks a lot."

"Open it. There's a problem."

"Are you insulting me again?"

Arc smiles, which rouses my curiosity. I flip the cover and, undoubtedly, find a lime-green note in there.

I remember Arc's handwriting by heart. He deliberately wrote every note for me. Regardless, this time it's different...

'Nong Arm, will you be my boyfriend?'

This is the message before my eyes. He wrote this for me out of the blue. I feel like crying but try my best to hold it in, then I read the note over and over again until the low voice reaches my ears. I gaze up.

"This book is hard but you can try to learn about it."

"What if...I don't understand it?"

"I'll teach you. I have all the time for you."

"..."

"Try to learn it yourself at home before you solve the problem."

"I'm not sure if I'll understand everything but this problem...I can manage," I reply, my voice trailing off, contradicting my pounding heart.

"Really? Can you tell me the answer?"

"Yeah."

"What?"

"P'Arc."

"What did you say? Your answer is unclear."

"Well, yeah. The answer is..."

"..."

"Yes."

"Correct. You're smart."

"I'd actually been waiting to solve this problem, but you never asked so I never had a chance."

This problem isn't even hard because you're the only one I like.

Chapter 17

A Steamy Story

[The God of Fire]

"Aw~ Woooo! Woohoo, woohoo."

"We were just eating and these bastards suddenly confessed their love."

"A sugar truck flipped over my food. What the fuck?"

"P'Arc, I'm...leaving. I...I have class later," Arm stutters, tipping down his chin. He probably just realized he has revealed his feelings in front of all my friends. The sight is pitiful and adorable at the same time.

"Your friends told me there's no class this afternoon," I oppose, wondering what his reaction will be. As expected, Arm keeps his eyes on the floor, his initial cheekiness gone. He's merely a kid getting bullied right now.

"R...Right. I forgot. But I have to go to the Humanities Department this afternoon."

"Sit here first."

"No. I'm not tired. Wah...Can you forget what I said earlier?" Arm glances up at me, tearing up. I want to pull him into my embrace right then and there.

"Forget what? Me asking you to be my boyfriend or that you'd been waiting for me to ask?"

"I don't know."

“Answer me and I’ll let you go.”

“The latter.”

“No, I won’t forget. It’s already in my mind.” Pressing his lips together, Arm gives no reply or reaction. Finally losing patience, I stand up, walk to him, and pat his head in adoration. I decide to allow this brat to return to where he came from.

“I’ll call you tonight. Make sure you pick up the call.”

Arm nods and bolts back to his table, leaving me watching his delicate back without blinking.

“Arc...”

“...”

“Arc.”

“...”

“Arc, you son of a bitch!”

“What the fuck?” I shift my gaze from my peer mentee and snarl at my friends. Unabashed, they make such annoying playful expressions that I’m itching to kick each of them off their chairs.

“How long would you look at him? You even ignored us. Were you so overjoyed that your brain stopped working?”

“Mind your own business.”

“We were minding our own business until that brat showed up in front of us,” Pond points out in a playful voice.

Copp chimes in. “We came up with such romantic plans that failed miserably because of your stupid ass. Who would’ve expected a surprise in a cafeteria? I was speechless.”

“I didn’t plan it.” I settle back in my seat and look at Arm’s handwriting with inexplicable feelings. Damn, I hate myself for being uncertain about my own emotions. It just feels exhilarating, like the world is in pastel colors and smells like love.

I didn't ask Arm to be my boyfriend with a grand gesture, letting it transpire naturally. Only my friends and Arm's know.

It's funny. I didn't plan to ask him this way, but I couldn't help but buy him milk when I saw his cute face. Not the expressive type. I wrote a note to tease him. Who would've thought Arm would retaliate with such cheekiness that even made my friends laugh? And it went on like that. We messed with each other until the calculus book popped up in my mind, and I used it to ask him to be my boyfrined.

See?! Wasn't it romantic?

"Yeah. Well, do you not need the book you gave Arm?" Bloom's question crushes all my thoughts. And I...

"Right, Arc, don't you need it for the exam?" They're right. It strikes me that I have to review it for the exam. I completely forgot. Love blinds you and turns you into an idiot.

"I'll just ask for it back."

"Ugggggh, you pig head! You were almost cool. Learn to use your head."

"How disappointing of the Superior Prince."

"Don't tell anyone you're my friend. This is fucking embarrassing."

My afternoon is no longer lonely since my friends keep teasing me about the calculus book until the class is over. Fuck! My memorable memory is me handing a book I need for the exam to a boy who doesn't need it. Thank you.

At eight, I grab my phone, go to someone's number, and stare at it without pressing 'call'.

I'd never once imagined a day I would overthink the first word to say after he picks up the call. I've lost myself because of him, but I can't stay cool and decide not to call. I fucking miss him and want to hear his voice. At last, I call him, unable to put aside my feelings.

Not making me wait long, Arm answers the phone immediately and greets me cheekily. [What's up, Superior Prince?]

He's fucking cuuuuuuuute. If he was here, I'd kiss the hell out of him and make his voice echoing down to the lobby.

"Hey, what are you doing?" My head is empty. All the words I've prepared vanish due to his playful and cute way.

[Studying.]

"What subject?"

[Calculus.] Arm replies right away and soon resumes, his voice much softer this time.

[The third one.]

"Can you understand it? You haven't taken the class."

[I study only the first page as told.] This kid is wicked.

"Ask me where you don't understand."

[I'm good.]

"No questions at all?"

[My friends asked what you said, but I didn't really answer. I was worried you'd be mad.

What should I tell them?] Arm is really innocent about certain things. I asked him to be my boyfriend. That means I don't plan to keep it a secret.

"Just tell them I asked you to be my boyfriend and that we're dating now."

[Isn't that too straightforward? They admire you so much. Will they beat me up if I tell them?]

"I'll fuck you if you don't tell them. You want that?"

[N...No, no.] His stuttering words draw a laugh out of my mouth. Soooooo cute. I want to play with him in bed. The thought turns me on. How do I turn it off?

"Have you eaten?" Let's change the topic.

[It's already nine. I've eaten.]

"Good."

[What about you?]

“No. I’ll go eat with my friends and study at the library, but I think I’ll stop by your dorm first.”

[W...Why?] Arm asks like he’s paranoid. I muster up all my courage to voice my need. No matter what he’ll think of me, I must accept it.

“Arm, I...”

[...]

“I have an exam. Can you give me the third calculus book back?”

[Hahahaha. What would you do if I said no?]

“Wanna get your ass kicked, you brat?” Fuck. This is humiliating. He’s laughing at me.

[Oh, I’m so scared.]

“What a pain in the ass. You’ll cry for it.”

[I’m so so scared. Soooo scared.]

“Will you stop saying that?”

[Nope.]

“I’m going there. If you want to keep bickering, just come down.”

[Do I have to bring the book?]

“You can come empty-handed. I won’t study anymore. I’ll just fuck someone.” That’s it.

My ears go numb from Arm’s berating before he hangs up.

I’ve never felt pretentious when I’m with him. It’s rare for me to be this comfortable around someone. My friends are my safe zone, and now Arm also is. Unlike all my past relationships, despite how much I was being myself, there were parts I kept from them.

Arm is the only one crumbling down those walls and getting to know me all the way...we can be ourselves without losing any parts.

I’ll be eating with my friends at a restaurant. Before that, I’ll see the brat at the dormitory.

I can actually retrieve the book later since it’s not that big of a deal, but the important thing is the cheeky face of the boy I wish to see.

"Wow, what a poser. You'll scrape your car." This brat already messes with me just because I'm leaning against my car.

Arm walks to the front of the dormitory with the calculus book in a not very tidy way. His hair is messy, and the white tee and shorts bug me. What if the mosquitoes bite him. I'm jealous of mosquitoes, seriously.

Turn me off please, I'm turned on again. This is so annoying.

Once the smaller guy stops before me, I shoot back jokingly. "Well, I'm handsome."

"Okay."

"You're okay to be fucked? All right."

"Go fuck around somewhere else."

"I want to do it here. Got a problem?"

"..." Arm is sulking.

"Where's my book?"

"Here." He hands me what I need and waves me off.

"Go eat. Your friends are waiting."

"I know. You go up now, or you'll be bitten by mosquitoes." I'll watch this naughty boy until he's out of sight.

"Okay. Bye."

"Yeah."

"Hey...don't forget to study this book."

"Got it."

Arm spins around and re-enters the dormitory, then I get back in my car. Before starting the engine, I check the calculus book. I wonder if Arm peeled off my note, hoping it's not still there.

And yes! My line green note is no longer on the first page. It has been replaced with a bright yellow note with his neat handwriting.

‘Study hard.’

BOOM!

A simple message with nothing special, and yet... It ends me right there.

It's the final exam season. As always, everywhere in the university is crowded with students reserving places to study. All cafés are packed, and the library is out of the question. It takes us two hours to find an empty spot.

I haven't seen Arm for three days. Firstly, he was busy studying with his friends. Secondly, I avoided him for fear of my inability to hold myself back. My patience has been low lately. Especially now that we're dating, I wish to cherish him like crazy.

Just one touch on the arm and sparks will fly. All I can do now is either send him some snacks or wait for the exams to be over before seeing him.

“You look like you got Fs on all tests. Focus on studying, will you?”

At ten, the library is in complete silence. Even so, I feel distracted.

“Can't you see I'm studying?”

“Yes, Arc, you are. May I ask if any of it goes into your head?”

“Mind your own business.”

“I know who's occupying your mind. Arm is cute, so a feral dog like you wants to bite him. But well, hasn't it been three days since you saw him?”

“Hey, come on! Don't slap him with the truth. Haha.”

I fucking hate these guys. They mess with me every single day. A bunch of jerks.

“Arc, what about this? Since you're distracted, just ask Arm to go to your place.” Copp tugs the lecture notes out of my hand while Pond and Bloom clear up the table. One of them whips out something from his backpack.

“I have something for you. Hehehehehehe.” Hehe, my ass!

“Come on. Ask him to go to your place tonight and get it on with him. I did some research.” They lay out all kinds of condom brands, and I knock their heads. Good thing our table is in a corner. No one notices.

My friends continue, showing off their presentation skills.

“This one is strawberry-scented. Damn...Damn, it’s so good. I used it once. The smell lingered from the bed to the door.” I scowl at them, yet they just raise another box.

“You don’t like it? There’s a thin type, 0,03 millimeters thick. It’s as if you wear nothing.”

“No? There’s this one with 0,01 millimeter thickness. How impressive is that?”

I shake my head, listening to my friends’ experiences unwillingly.

“If you don’t prefer it, what about the rough one? The texture is arousing. This one is the bomb.”

“Enough.” I cease the conversation in annoyance because I can’t handle their presentations anymore. The result, however, is the total opposite.

“Whooooa, Arc. Since you’ve learned the condom options, let me present you this special lubricant gel. No color. No scent. Imported from England.”

“...”

“If you like it scented, this one will do. Cherry-blossom-scented. It’ll feel like you’re having sex in a flower garden.”

“I don’t think that suits Arc. I recommend this brand. It has an extract that will harden you. Enough to crack heads. I guarantee you’ll be as hard as granite.”

It stresses me out. I didn’t imagine much at first, but the sexual topic made my imagination go wild. By the time I shut those thoughts off, those motherfuckers have poured everything into my backpack.

“For you.”

“Let’s study, you bastards.”

“I know nothing can hold you back now. Go ahead! Do it for humanity’s happiness.”

“Arm has an exam. He needs to study.”

“Don’t act all moral. Your eyes reveal all the perverted thoughts toward that brat. What are you going to do? I’ll take him if you don’t.” Copp’s last remark earns him a glower from me.

I snarl through gritted teeth. “Give Arm some respect.”

I’m the only one allowed to have perverted thoughts...

“You love him so much, huh? No one can flirt with him, or you’ll get jealous. So what? You suck and you’re such a jealous dude.”

Although I heave a sigh, I call Arm to shut them up. I can’t believe the overflowing horniness has driven me to show up at his study room again.

“Our idol is here. P’Arcccccccccc!”

They boys greet me as soon as I stick my head inside. I have no idea what I did to make these freshmen admire me so much and get so enthusiastic at my sight.

More importantly, everyone in the department have started to learn Arm and I are dating, so it’s not strange if I show up in the study room of the freshmen. These guys even prepare a chair for me next to the brat.

“What subject are you studying?”

“Mechanics. P’Arc, please tell me if Arm messes with you. I’ll give him a lesson.”

“Superior Prince, I’m way cooler. My heart also hasn’t been stolen.”

“Study. I’ll kick your ass if you keep barking.”

The mood palpably lightens up. No one is scared of me anymore. They simply joke around, provoking me to beat them up. These kids have no respect. My friends annoy me, these kids drive me up the walls. Fantastic!

“You’re not studying with your friends?” asks the boy who has been quiet all this time. Arm stares at me stupidly and presses his lips together. Oddly arousing.

The condoms in my backpack are vibrating in excitement.

"I did. I'm here now that I'm free. Did you keep up with your friends?" I look at the smaller guy's lecture note and glance up at him.

"Of course. I'm smart."

"You're also annoying."

"Can you not mess with me for a day?"

"Mess with you? I'm just speaking the truth." Arm pouts his tiny lips and diverts his attention to the notes.

Sitting beside him, I teach him and give him tips when he struggles to keep up with those guys. To be honest, it irritates me as hell whenever he scratches his head. He's so stupid, yet I'm head over heels in love with him.

The study session continues until it's one in the morning. Arm's dormmates pack up and leave one by one as I think of a plan to lure this brat to my place.

"Whom did you come here with?" I ask expectantly.

"Po and Sand."

"I'll give you a ride."

"Don't bother. It's more convenient since we're using the same route. You should get some rest, too."

"It's okay. I don't mind giving my boyfriend a ride."

"..."

Oh, his eyes pop. I can devour him right here. I'm fucking horny.

"So?"

"Okay. Let me tell the guys first." Yes! The start is successful.

My plan is to drive to my apartment and ask Arm to stay over.

In the real situation, however, the brat blurts out before I even swerve. "P'Arc, where are you taking me? Turn right to the dorms."

"Okay, okay."

“Turn right.”

“I know. Why do you keep saying it?” I almost swerve off the road. My plan is ruined. Since I also don’t have enough courage, I decide to drive the smaller guy to the dormitory.

Before leaving, I ask for something to freshen up my heart. “What do you do before you leave?”

Arm blinks in confusion before folding his hands over his chest. “Thank you.”

“Not that. You have to kiss my cheek.”

“Why?”

“Why not? We’re dating. You have to.” Arm stays rigid, not moving. “So? Or are you going to sleep in my car?”

A few moments later, Arm is in motion. He unfastens his seatbelt with his delicate hands and slowly leans toward me. I don’t expect anything much but some sweet gesture. Who would’ve thought he’d exceed my request? My heart almost leaps out of my chest when his lips touch mine briefly, but deadly.

“Thank you for the ride. Good night.”

“Yeah...”

BAM!

Arm has closed the door, but I still freeze, as if I’m cursed. One thing moves, and I despise myself for being unable to control my body.

Fuck... I’m hard.

Tomorrow is the first exam day.

I’ve checked Arm’s schedule. He has one exam in the afternoon, an easy mandatory subject. My first exam is the day after tomorrow, so I can spend time with the brat at the café to tutor him and patiently complete exercises with him.

Late in the evening, I take him out to dinner and bring him to my apartment to study some more.

Life is getting exciting.

“Go take a shower before studying.” It’s already ten. I’ve showered to ease my horniness while Arm is still in the same clothes.

“Maybe later.”

“Arm, don’t be naughty.”

“I’m not.”

“Arm.”

“Hey, did I do it right?” Arm asks. At that moment, refusing to give him an answer, I lift him from the cushion and throw him onto the bed.

“Hey, what are you doing? It hurts!” He rubs his butt. Seeing my serious expression, his innocent eyes widen in panic.

“You know I can’t stay patient with you for too long, don’t you?”

“Patient with what? You don’t have to tutor me if you don’t want to. I...It’s time I go back, anyway.”

“You’re not leaving.”

I watch Arm helplessly recede to the headboard.

“My friend called. I...I have to leave,” Arm quavers pitifully. But this is no time to feel sympathy because my situation is way worse than this naughty brat’s.

“No worries. I’ll give you a ride in the morning,” I say, casually.

“I...I can go by myself. I’m good at that. You should get some sleep.”

Will I let him go? Hell no! I quickly crawl up onto the bed and reach to the drawer to get a condom. Watch me, you brat. I mean business.

Unwrapping it the usual way isn’t memorable. I’ll rip the wrap with my teeth. Your toes will be shaking in excitement at the coolness of the Superior Prince.

“P...P’Arc, I’m a good boy. A good boy should go home early.”

“...”

“P’Arc...”

“Wait a second,” I say, trying to bite the wrap off in determination. But it doesn’t work no matter how hard I try, and it disheartens me. All right! I give up. I’ll just rip it with my hands. Why the fuck did I choose the hard way.

Am I embarrassed? Yes, I am. I didn’t plan to get it on with this naughty brat today. I just wanted to show him my coolness. Look at me now. Not cool at all.

I throw the condom away. Nothing goes as I hope.

“Why don’t you take a shower first?” I say, plainly. Arm, quivering, shakes his head, insisting on leaving.

“You’re mean to me. I’m going to leave. No studying.”

“You’re crying because I teased you a little?”

“Who’s crying? I’m not.”

“I’m not going to do anything. You have an exam tomorrow. I won’t mess with you,” I say, tugging his fair hand and pushing him gently into the bathroom. Trusting me, Arm showers as told.

While waiting, I gather books and lecture notes from my first year for Arm to review after studying the main lessons.

Ten minutes later, the smaller guy steps out of the bathroom in my clothes. We’ve agreed that everything in my apartment is his, so clothes aren’t a problem.

“I didn’t wash my hair.”

“Is that something to be proud of?”

“It is. My hair doesn’t smell bad. I washed it yesterday. It still smells good,” says Arm, smiling. He hangs his towel on the hanger and shoves his clothes into his backpack.

“How do you know it smells good? Bullshit.”

“Whoa, how could you say that? Smell it yourself.” Not thoughtful of me at all, he walks over and tilts his head toward me.

He's right. His hair smells fucking good. Like fried pork and sticky rice.

"Study hard. I'll give you a ride before midnight."

"Okay."

Arm returns to the small table and reviews the lessons diligently. It's not even the subject tomorrow, but the most difficult selective one in the first year.

"P'Arc, check this problem for me."

Sighing, I walk over, sit cross-legged next to the smaller guy, and pick the piece of paper to examine it carefully.

"Wrong."

"Oh, how?"

"You can't cut the numbers like this. Look here." We get serious.

Arm smells wonderful after the shower. Even though I'm familiar with the scent of my shower cream, when I smell it on the boy beside me, I feel like fainting.

Does this brat have any idea? Of course not! I walk him through the problem, and he nods and tries again.

Arm's ambitious eyes and vigor are killing me. It's a mistake bringing him here since I finally lose control over my emotions.

"Arm."

"Mm..."

"Arm." I didn't plan to do anything. The reason I brought him here is to enjoy spending time with him, and yet...

Besides my heart, my body is getting excited.

As the smaller guy focuses on the exercise, I lean over and seal his lips with mine.

"Mmmmm." Arm is completely in my control even before he can protest, dropping the pencil on the table. I embrace him and use my skills to slip my tongue into his mouth.

We're soon drunk in the sweet touch. Arm panics briefly before calming down. Quivering, he allows me to devour all of him.

"Can I kiss you again?" I pull away momentarily to ask for what I want. Arm goes feeble in my arms.

"Mm..." he replies.

We kiss...and kiss, but my heart yearns for more. I can't get enough of touching his skin. My shirt is huge on him, making it easy to remove. The smaller guy is barely aware of his half-naked state. By the time he collects himself, I've already laid him on the mattress.

"P'Arc," Arm's eyes are sexily glazed, robbing me of my patience.

I can't take this anymore. Fuck the exam. My heart is ready for a full play.

I pull the shorts and underwear off his legs. Arm recoils by instinct and asks a question.

"Are you really going to do it?"

"Well, you're so inviting."

"I'm not."

"So what?"

"You're mean," Arm tells me off. Do I care? Not even for a bit. My desire overpowers everything right now. And in the heat of immense patience, we're both finally naked.

"I don't think I can stop now, Arm." My part hardens. Even if anyone attempts to halt me, I might go insane.

"I've never done this," says Arm, burying his face in the pillow, curling his body to hide his private part from me.

"Sex is natural."

"I know." He presses his lips together before nodding in permission.

"Well, then, can we keep going?"

“Yeah.” Upon his answer, I lean down and kiss him over and over, caressing his smooth back. I embrace the smaller guy’s trembling body and slowly shift so we’re both in more comfortable positions.

A clear drop of saliva rolls from the corner of his mouth down to his fair neck. Arm closes his eyes and awkwardly drapes his arms around me, so adorable that my heart swells.

I push him down on the bed and slide a pillow under his head to absorb the impact, then I start devouring him with passion. I kiss his lips until they get swollen before traveling down his fair neck, collarbones and lower parts.

“H...Hic, P’Arc,” Arm quavers as my lips touch his nipple. The instant reaction is pleasant because the naughty brat no longer resists.

I bite his nipple gently, sending him such pleasure that he squirms. Arm digs his nails into my back as he holds me, so I pay him back by nibbling and biting him until his flawless body is full of kiss marks.

“Wah, P’Arc...”

“Did I hurt you?” I ask, looking up. Arm shakes his head adorably, mumbling with his swollen lips.

“No, but...it felt weird.”

“Good or bad?”

Arm stays silent, but I assume it felt good for him. Since we’ve come this far, let’s not waste a second. Let’s go all out.

With that thought, I grab both Arm’s wrists and kiss his lips again calmly. I never took this much time with sex. But since it’s his first time and he’s the one I love dearly, I need to be careful not to hurt him.

My hot tongue explores the perfect shape of his body with the scent of shower cream lingering in my nose. His smooth, fair skin is so captivating that I can’t hold back and taste every

inch from his wrists, chest, down to his flat stomach that tenses up from the movements of my tongue.

I was going to lick his body to arouse him, but I got aroused instead.

“P’Arc, not there. No...”

“Why?”

“Not like that.” It’s like he knows his tears soften me.

“Okay, I won’t do it.” I don’t put his private part into my mouth. Plus, Arm is covering it as best as he can with his hands. Not forcing it, I straighten up, put my hands under his knees, and spread his legs.

“You said you won’t do it.”

“I won’t. I’ll just make you feel more comfortable. Take your hands off.”

“No.”

“Naughty. You want to get punished?”

“Spare my life.” I laugh at his cheeky plead. He’s still being himself in this situation.

“I’m not going to kill you. Take your hands off.”

“It’s embarrassing.”

“If you take your hands off, I’ll take care of it with mine. If not, I’ll tie your hands and use my mouth. What do you say?”

“Hic...Hic...”

“Give me the answer.” I feel bad seeing him sniffing like this.

“The third choice.”

“Okay...Okay, Anon.” I drop his legs and grasp his wrists to pin him down. Arm, faster, twitches in a panic and throws himself into my arms.

He cries in my chest, his tears smearing my skin, and begs for mercy.

“Your hand. Use your hand.”

“That’s it. You were naughty.” I push his shoulders down. His red face and neck sink into the pillow, his eyes unable to meet mine.

Every inch of his body is full of kiss marks. The sight stimulates my desire tremendously. I like Arm’s expression right now. A mix of emotions: patience, uneasiness, and contentment.

“Good boy. There’s nothing to be afraid of. You’ll feel better.” I stroke his thigh gently and slowly touch his groin with the other hand. I try to be patient and grit my teeth to suppress the immense desire deep inside.

It’s not time yet.

If I rush it, Arm won’t be happy. I know the first time is painful, but I have to ease him into giving into that pain for me.

“Take a deep breath like when we were in the bathroom together.” What happened that day is engraved in my memory. I was happy and excited back then. It was my first time touching Arm where no one else could.

I wrap my palm around his half-hardened part and move slowly, rubbing the tip with my thumb. A raspy moan escapes his mouth below me.

“A...Ah...”

I stroke his thigh up to his stomach while my other hand keeps up the pace until his slender body spasms. Arm frowns in pleasure.

“P’Arc, no more. Hic, it feels...” His voice trails off. His teary eyes widen as I quicken up until his part stiffens straight. We indeed take it slow. But as his body reaches the limit, Arm loses himself.

“Good boy, does it feel good?” I ask.

“I can’t take it...I...It’s like...” His legs tense, his nails dig into the bedsheets, Arm curls his toes in agonizing pleasure, struggling to find a way out. Soon everything will be over.

I won’t allow that.

Instead of moving my hand faster to take him to heaven, I halt and press my thumb on the tip. Gasping, Arm seizes my arms with his shaking hands, tears trickling down his face.

"P'Arc, help me. I was so close. Help..." Arm shakes his head in pain, his hips heaving up and down in an attempt to free himself from my hot grip.

"I'll help you."

"Hic, thank you."

"But you have to help me, too."

"T...Tell me. Hic, I'll do anything."

"Loosen yourself first, and I'll help you." The ruined climax must've caused him distress. Arm curses me with a variety of words and tries to touch himself, but I brush his hands off every time. Eventually, he realizes all his attempts are useless and he obeys me.

"Naughty boy, spread your legs wider."

"..."

"You're only prolonging the torment." My hand stays wrapped around the tip while the other pushes the small guy's thigh open.

Arm buries his flushing, shy face in the pillow, casting his eyes down, refusing to look at me. His already swollen bottom lip gets worse because he keeps biting it until it bleeds in pain of the ruined climax.

"That's right. Put your finger in slowly, good boy."

Arm rubs his back entrance with his index finger, not inserting it. I provoke him by grinding the tip of his private part, making him moan in a high-pitched voice.

"Ahhhh, fuck you."

"You can take it slow. No rush. You can suffer until morning."

"Wah, you're mean. You're so mean to me."

"Go on and cry. I don't feel bad."

I hear Arm take a deep breath and watch his long index finger slowly slip into his back entrance. It goes in slightly and he screams like his legs get run over by a car.

"It hurts."

A fruitless attempt. His tolerance is low and his body twitches unstoppably. He kicks around out of my grip. That's when Arm sits up, leans against the headboard, spreads his legs, and holds his private part to free himself.

Arm moves his hand up and down. He soon grunts as the white liquid spurts out. The smaller guy pants violently, worrying me, but his breath gradually becomes steady.

The delicate figure plops in exhaustion before me. Feeling terribly sorry, I stop messing with him, kiss his temple, and whisper in his ear.

"I'm sorry. I won't mess with you anymore. No more."

"I was embarrassed, but you kept messing with me."

"Sorry..." If someone shakes off his shyness and touches himself in front of another person, it must be unbearable. Feeling bad, I'm willing to redeem myself.

"I won't ever do that again."

"I'll crush yours in my hand."

"Do it. I like that." Realizing his threat fails to scare me, Arm bursts into tears. I comfort him for a while to calm him down. What do I do now? I have to start over. Damn it.

I build up the mood, kiss him, touch him, and get to the tricky part: loosening him up.

I reach to the nightstand and lay out various brands of lubricant gel beside the fair guy before asking him compliantly. "Which one do you like?"

"I...I don't know. I've never used it. I...I'll do some research first."

"No can do." I'm not letting you get away.

"I can't take this."

"It'll be okay. Do you trust me?"

"No." The end...

“This one, then. The guys said it’s not sticky or scented. “I change the topic and spread Arm’s legs, exposing his closed back entrance. To my surprise, it arouses me so aggressively that I can’t wait even for a second. After pouring the lubricant gel, I insert my middle finger inside immediately.

“Uk!” It gets stuck halfway.

“Relax, good boy.”

“How? Wah, I never...relax it.” Arm wipes the tears off his cheeks. His legs tremble so hard I have to grab one of them.

“Take a deep breath. Don’t tighten my finger.” It’s fucking tight. Only one finger in and my bones nearly crack. I can’t imagine how painful it will be when I put my hard part in.

“Just like that. Good boy, well done.” I lean down and kiss his bloody lips, pushing my finger in all the way.

“Ah.”

Arm frowns in pain. I stay like that for a while to let his body adjust, then I start moving. The war begins. Arm shrieks so loud the neighbors must hear it. He cries when I push deep and cries again when I pull out. His tears could drown us.

It’s worse with the second and third fingers. Everything is awkward because Arm is in so much pain. I pull out my fingers, add more lubricant gel, and slide them back in. His back passage tightens, so hot that I almost lose it.

All I can think of is how to get my firm part inside since the naughty boy is in pain. My thoughts run fast. I yank the drawer again, grab an inhaler and put it over his nose.

“Use this so you don’t pass out.”

I set another pillow under his fair hips, exposing his private parts even more. Arm cries so hard his eyes are half-closed. One hand clutches the inhaler while the other shakes my arm pleadingly.

I slide my arms under his knees again and position myself between his legs. I put on a condom clumsily, grit my teeth and point my stiff part against his back entrance.

“Tell me if you can’t take it.”

“You’ll stop?”

“No. I was just saying that.”

“Huh? Waaaaaah.”

“I’ll take it slow, Arm. Tell me if it hurts, okay?”

“It hurts.”

“Not yet! I haven’t even started.”

This brat is cheeky even in an important moment like this. He’ll cry later. After I apply the lubricant gel on my firm part and his back entrance, it’s showtime.

“Take a deep breath. Use the inhaler. I’ll put it in slowly,” I remind him and gradually press my hard part inside.

The second my firm part enters the hotness inside, Arm places his hand on his stomach and moans. It’s tight all over. I can neither reach deeper inside nor withdraw, stuck in the tightness of the boy under me.

I suppress my desire and lean down to embrace his delicate body, I shower his face and neck with kisses and whisper sweet words in his ears the way I’ve never done to anyone to soothe him.

My hot tongue swirls around his stiff nipples, making Arm moan in pleasure.

“Well done, good boy. Relax...”

My firm part slowly inches in, finally halfway, and I keep pushing.

“I love you, Arm.”

“ ... ”

“Please let me in. Let me...” It works. The naughty boy relaxes as I proceed with care. His back entrance must not tear, so I can’t be rough. I allow him to adjust his delicate body to my insertion.

“Does it hurt?” I ask once the tricky part is over.

“Yeah.”

“Does it hurt bad?”

“Mm.” Arm nods, his lips bruised from getting bitten.

“Cry out if it hurts. You’re acting tough in front of me. You can be weak because I’ll always protect you.” I hug the smaller guy tightly and lift his arms to hold me back.

Every inch of our bodies cling to each other. I hear his heartbeat as our bodies connect into one. I wish to stay like this for a long time, but I know it’s tormenting Arm.

I kiss his lips, exchanging sweetness for a while, then wipe off his tears. His flat stomach tenses from my firm part inside his body. I press it gently to relieve his anxiety.

“It’s okay, good boy. Look at me.”

“It’s going to be okay, right?”

“You’ll be happy. Do you trust me?”

“Yes.”

“...”

“I trust you because I love you.”

Those words fulfill all of my feelings, and we turn our attention back to our first time. I prop his leg over my shoulder and spread his other leg on the mattress, then slowly pull out my firm part and put it back in through the air rhythmically.

Arm moans, tears rolling down his cheek pitifully, But at this point, my head is empty.

“Too rough...P...P’Arc.”

I quicken the pace and thrust harder, rocking the lying guy’s body. He digs his nails into my back to vent the pain.

His clear voice crying out evokes me to my primal instinct like crazy. Beads of sweat cover my face and body. The panting and sloshing inside echo across the room.

I'm floating. It feels amazing. The touch, the smell, and the sound in my ears.

Arm is like a lost child. He lets me flip him over as my heart desires, all the while moaning nonstop.

"Waaaaaaaah..."

His cuteness provokes me to tease him. It doesn't end in bed. After asking the smaller guy to stay in the same position for some time and flipping him on all fours for some more time, I feel bad. I carry him with our lower parts connecting, head into the bathroom and sweep everything off the countertop.

SHATTER!

Fuck. The perfume bottle broke.

It doesn't matter. What matters is our lovemaking.

I place the red, delicate body on the countertop, push him against the huge mirror, spread his legs and put my firm part into his softness all the way in.

"It's deep...P'Arc, too deep." I nod in response, though I can barely hold back.

As this position isn't satisfying enough, I spin him to face the mirror and thrust harder. The lewd sound resounds in the room as his fair butt hits my thighs. The clear lubricant gel flows down his legs. The bathroom is reverberated by wet noises, and it intensifies my lust to its peak.

The last moment before we climax, I hold his stiff part and move from the front and back at the same time.

"P'Arc, I can't take this anymore. Ahh..."

"Together."

"Hic."

The light flashes, whitening the world, ridding all colors. Our bodies spasm simultaneously. White liquid shoots all over his stomach while I release inside him. His eyes widen as he moans indecipherably.

“P’Arc...it’s tight.”

“Hang in there.” My body keeps twitching until the last drop comes out. I maintain the position while Arm closes his eyes, too exhausted to move.

I withdraw my private part with thick white liquid oozing in the condom. I kiss his temple in gratitude and carry the drained guy to the shower. But damn!

Fuck. I was horny and wanted to make love to Arm to my heart’s content, so I pulled off the cool move, clearing the countertop empty. Forgetting how breakable those bottles could be, I step on the shards with both bare feet. Blood smears all over the floor.

“Hicccc.”

“Hold on a second. Hang in there.” I have no time to tend to myself. The boy in my embrace is more important.

I flick my eyes over the smaller guy’s body to check for injuries. Seeing none, I set him against the wall and turn on warm water to clean up.

Without a bathtub this is slightly awkward. Arm isn’t knocked out, fluttering his eyelids open and groaning as I wash his body.

“P’Arc.”

“It’ll be done soon. Just a bit more.”

Once the shower is over, I quickly fetch a first aid kit for painkillers, antibiotics, and specific ointments for Arm. I lay him on the bed, clothe him, and cover him in the blanket. After that, I treat my wounds, hold on the bed, and cuddle the naughty boy in satisfaction.

“Sorry.”

I kiss his eyelids amid the soft moan of the boy in my arms.

You’re so cute that I can’t help teasing you.

In the morning, my fear comes to life.

Arm has a fever. He's been crying since he woke up, and I run around to get him medications. It all happened because of my recklessness. Moreover, this is an important day: the day of the first exam of finals.

"Arm, get up. It's okay. It's okay..." I comfort him despite the storm in my heart, scared and worried at the same time.

I prop a pillow against the headboard and slowly place the smaller guy over it.

I tug the blanket off and remove his shorts to check for his wound, but Arm resists in embarrassment. Fortunately, it didn't tear. I'm relieved.

"Eat breakfast and take the pills. I'll call Po and Sand and tell them to bring your clothes here." I can't leave him in this poor state. His face and lips are pale.

I put the back of my hand on Arm's forehead to find he's still burning up and give him a wet towel treatment all over his body before warming a simple dish, frozen porridge, for him. I'll help him with the meal and medications.

"Nong Arm, wake up."

"You're mean," Arm mutters his lips dry.

"I'm sorry. Get up and eat some food, or you'll feel worse." If the fever doesn't subside today, I'll take him to the doctor after the exam.

He has an exam at one in the afternoon. It's half past ten now.

I stroke his pale cheek to wake him up. The sight of Arm asleep sitting up worries me like crazy,

"Where does it hurt?"

"There. My waist and..." Arm cries.

"Good boy, eat some food. It won't feel better if you don't eat."

"You were rough."

"I know."

"I told you to slow down, but you wouldn't," Arm starts whining. That's not the end. He complains about all the things that happened last night with no embarrassment. I suppose his frustration has taken over him.

"And, and it was so deep."

"..."

"How could you put that huge thing inside me?" I could, apparently.

"..."

"My waist hurts," He whines while I feed him. The brat munches, grumbles and cries.

Don't do everything at the same time!

"Calm down and eat first. You can whine after chewing."

"That position was painful. I was on all fours." Arm doesn't listen. Chew first.

"..."

"It was so deep that my stomach felt tight."

"Okay. I won't do that position anymore."

"No more. I won't let you."

Last night Arm was anxious at first, but then the pain in his moans became pleasure. I doubt it was only the pain that he felt. It was incredible as well, but he wouldn't admit it and only pointed out the negative things to tell me.

By the time everything is over, it's already noon. Sand and Pipo arrive at my apartment with Arm's student uniform, but I don't invite them in for privacy and to protect the naughty brat from getting teased. And so, I ask them to leave. After I feed the sick guy, wash him up, and get him dressed, I drive him to the university.

"Hey, Arm, what's wrong?"

"I...I got a fever."

Arm's eyes are swollen like ostrich eggs and his face is so pale that it looks like he might faint at any minute. He staggers, yet he grits his teeth and tries to walk as normally as possible. As for me...

I'm no different due to the wounds from the glass shards last night. That serves me right, I guess.

"Arc, what's wrong?"

"I fell off my motorbike."

"You have a motorbike? I've never seen it."

"Your questions are annoying."

"Did you two fall off together? You are both walking weird."

"Yeah!"

We fell onto the bed and got severely injured. Today is the first exam day. The freshmen gathering at the general building continue asking about our conditions. I support the smaller guy to the exam room and coddle him since his fever is still high.

I usually only had lecture notes, textbooks and pens in my backpack. Today, however, I have cooling gel, refreshing towels, and medications for my boyfriend.

Even though I've layered a thin towel inside the stupid brat's pants, it still hurts when he sits, given his frown. When our eyes meet, he pouts, on the verge of tears again.

"No. Don't cry."

"You hurt me."

"I'll let you hit me. Hard."

"Your feet hurt, too," Arm says meekly, dropping his gaze to my feet.

"It's okay. You're more hurt. Do you remember the reviewed lessons?"

"Waaah, I only remember you railed me."

"Write that down if you don't know the answer."

"Fuck off."

What a pain. His mouth still works well despite the high fever.

“Let’s put on the cooling gel. You can remove it before the exam starts.” Arm doesn’t argue. I unwrap the cooling gel and plaster it on his burning forehead.

Half an hour later, Arm’s first exam begins. For the fear that he might faint, I stay in front of the room and peek through the glass window on the door. When the exam is finally over, the students exit one by one. The last person wobbling out is my boyfriend.

“How was it? Did it go well?”

“Easy-peasy.” His face says otherwise.

“Let’s apply some ointment first. We’ll get some takeouts and eat at my apartment.”

“I’ll do it myself. You don’t need to do it for me.” Colors appear on his pale face slightly at my suggestion.

“How? You can barely stand straight. Come on! Let’s go to the restroom.”

“Waaaaaaah.”

“If you keep whining, you won’t get to sleep tonight.”

“It hurts.”

“That’s why you need to be treated.”

It takes a while to persuade the brat to go to the restroom. I take the ointment out of the box, push the smaller guy into a stall, lock the door and yank off his pants.

“Turn around.” I order.

“Keep it down.”

“Nobody is here. Come on.”

“Hic. Be gentle, okay?”

“Mm.” Arm faces the wall and spreads his legs. I squeeze the white gel on my fingers and apply it to his back entrance gently. But despite how gentle I am, he quavers.

“Does it hurt?”

“Yea. P’Arc...not too deep.”

“Quit whining. Almost done.”

It actually takes long. By the time I’ve finished applying the ointment and putting his pants back on, I nearly faint instead of him. After that, I support him out of the bathroom. We both stagger.

The Superior Prince is ruined. My image is all ruined.

[Po Knows, the World Knows]

CLACK!

I walk out of the bathroom and shake my head, still flabbergasted.

Those were unmistakably Arc and Arm’s voices. They were having sex in the men’s restroom. I’m absolutely shocked since everything is now clear without the need for proof.

Oh, my goooooooooooooosh!

The Superior Prince has been my idol for life, and my best friend just got it with him right in my presence.

Whooooooooa~~ My heart is all over the place.

I look at myself in the mirror with a storm of emotions in my mind. I have to vent it to someone. Since this is my friend’s secret, I can’t reveal it to anyone but Sand, my dear friend.

I call him in an instant. When he picks up, I spill it all out.

“Hey, P’Arc and Ai’Arm had sex.”

“...”

“In the restroom just now!”

Chapter 18

Not a Friend, Dad

[The God of Fire]

I take Arm out of the restroom with much difficulty, planning to buy takeouts and return to my apartment with him immediately since the brat can't move freely. If possible, I wish to bring him to my place and rest all day.

"P'Arc, it hurts. I'm in pain..." Arm whines after walking a short distance, not even ten steps.

"Hang in there. Doesn't it feel better after applying the ointment?"

"No." he says, shaking his head. Is he my boyfriend or my son?

"Hang in there. Want me to carry you?"

"No. I don't want to get caught."

As if no one would assume when you wobbled into the exam room with spread legs. I refrain from pointing it out for the sake of his dignity and play dumb.

"Walk slowly. You'll feel better soon." I was never the type to comfort anyone. Arm is an exception. I'm willing to listen to him whining every day. It's not like I have to force myself since I care about him.

How romantic, right?

It will be more romantic when I find a way to have sex with him again. Last night failed to quench my thirst. When we finally have time, I'll fuck him until he can't move for a week. I must push that thought aside for the time being and stop dwelling on this. It would be messy if I got a boner right now.

We reach the cafeteria in the general building, packed with students from all departments with barely any space left. I glance around for an empty table for this naughty brat to sit at so I can get our food and drive him home, but there's no place for him in any corner.

"There's no table for you to sit at. Why don't we leave and order food delivery?" I ask the boy beside me. Arm nods, his face pitifully pale.

"Aw~ what brings you here, Arc?"

At critical moments, these bastards always show up. I'm dying to curse them. How is Arm supposed to not get flustered before these three assholes? He trembles and shifts his eyes around in panic.

"Can't I be here? You're also here."

"Oh, oh, we're here to flirt with girls. You said you were busy. How come you're with nong Arm?"

"He's my boyfriend. Am I not allowed to give him rides?"

"Gooooooooosh, you call him your boyfriend now? I'm shy."

"I want to date the Superior Prince as well."

I want to kill my friends.

I turn to Arm for his opinion, and he answers with his eyes. I must do anything to take him back to my apartment as fast as possible while avoiding my friends' nosy questions.

"Get the hell away. Arm and I were just leaving."

"Why? We just ran into each other. Let's eat together."

"There's no table. Use your eyes."

"I did. They got up. Pond, go!" At that, Pond darts to the empty medium-sized table in a flash. The guys follow, holding Arm's hand.

"Nong Arm, come on." Bloom rushes.

"Let go of his hand, you piece of shit. He can walk there himself." I separate them and grab Arm's wrist before we make our way up slowly to the table.

"Slowly. No rush."

"You take such good care of him as if he's about to die."

"Mind your own business."

"Okay~ I will. Oh, the freshmen said you and Arm fell off a motorbike. How are you?"

"As you can see." Our states support the lie. We would've gotten ourselves admitted to the hospital if possible.

"I'm sure it was bad. Look at Arm's face. He's pale like chicken feet. He was always barking, but now he's oddly quiet. "Hey! Arm, you okay?" Copp switches his attention from me to the little guy. Arm sits silently for a moment before answering in a rather cheeky way.

"I'll feel okay if you leave me alone."

"This fucking brat..."

"Go get your food and stop messing with him. It's annoying." I snarl. The guys stare at me tauntingly.

"All right. We're off."

Those motherfuckers split to different food stalls, leaving me and the brat, who's in a poor state, alone.

My heart heavy with worry, I ask him "Should we go? We can leave after I get takeouts."

"Your friends will kick a fuss."

"Fuck them."

"I don't want anyone to know we did it." His voice trails off amusingly. How fucked up I am to wish to tease him more until he cries.

"Did what?"

"Quit messing with me. You hurt me. Take responsibility."

"I'll help you shower when we're at the apartment." Sweet.

"No!"

"What do you want?"

"Food."

"Sure. What do you want to eat?" I never pamper my family. Who are you to make me care about so much? I hate this. Damn it.

"Minced pork with basil."

"You have a death wish? Eat something light for your stomach." We went berserk last night, yet he wanted spicy minced pork with basil. I suppose he needs another lesson.

"You choose, then."

"What about the beverage? What do you want?"

"Cola."

"Just water. You're sick."

"Why did you even ask, then?"

"To make sure a naughty brat knows he's sick. Stop acting tough."

"I'm tough."

"You're all talk but you suck in bed."

"..."

Upon my remark, Arm pouts like he's about to cry again. I quickly ruffle his hair in consolation and leave to get some food. When I'm back, I see my friends interrogating Arm, who looks up at me for help.

"What are you doing?" I place a bowl of porridge with minced pork and a water bottle in front of the sick guy.

"Nothing. We just asked how the motorbike fell and which motorbike it was. I heard you don't ride one."

I squeeze between them and scowl at the one asking the question.

They have a rough idea about what actually happened. Why are they trying to embarrass my boyfriend?

"It's none of your concern. Just eat. Arm is sick."

"I'll feed you, nong Arm."

"I...I can do it." Arm picks up the spoon and eats slowly. I can't do anything but send him my encouragement in silence. My friends, on the contrary, are everything but silent. Why the fuck can't they shut up? Copp is the first to share an epic story.

"Hey, nong Arm, you should keep your guard up now that you're dating my friend." Arm halts for a moment before asking in hesitation, blinking stupidly.

“Why?”

“Don’t you know Arc is a pervert? I’m warning you because you’re my nong and I’m worried he’ll eat you up.”

“...” My naughty boy is in complete silence.

“Plus, he’s fucking rough. His ex got admitted to the hospital.”

“Huuuuuuuh?”

“They made that up. Don’t listen to them. Just eat. You only took two bites,” I coax. If I let him listen to my friends, I’d lose my chance. Knowing this, Copp and the guys enjoy their dishes with a smile.

I never did any of what they claimed I’d done, but I knew they couldn’t help joking when they saw Arm in that state. Look at my peer mentee. His eyes are swollen. His lips and ears are all red. He’s so cute I want to squeeze him. How amazing I am to hold myself back like this.

“P’Arc, I’m full.”

“You didn’t eat much. Do you want to go eat at my place?”

“I’m full.” He meets my gaze pleadingly.

“You need to take the pills after the meal. At this rate, you won’t get better.”

“You hurt me.”

“I won’t hurt you again.”

“Liar. There’s no next time.”

“Hold up. Are you sure you fell off a motorbike, not something else?” Pond sticks his nose in. Arm and I glare at him simultaneously before he whines again.

It’s a mess. Arm no longer cares about his image, whimpering with teary eyes. Who wouldn’t feel bad at the sight?

Unable to stand it, I excuse myself to bring the sick guy home. At first, I carefully put him in my car and adjust the seat to be more comfortable. But once we’ve arrived at the condominium, my patience vanishes. I carry Arm into the elevator and march to my apartment at

high speed. I should've done this from the beginning. We could've reached home half an hour earlier.

Now that we're alone, the building storm strikes.

Arm whines on the bed, complaining about where it aches like a demanding child. His eyes get even more swollen, but I don't care. I strip him and apply the ointment on each part of his body.

"It hurts. Wah, it hurts..."

"I know. I know." Staying calm, I smear the ointment on his body while stroking his back until I'm finished.

Unfortunately, we both have an exam tomorrow, and Arm's brain can't process anything right now. I let him rest and wake him up in the evening to have dinner.

"Arm..."

Still burning up, he knits his brow tightly even in his sleep.

"Arm, wake up. Time for dinner."

I've planned the night out. After dinner, I'll give him medications and a wet towel treatment, then tutor him. As for his clothes for tomorrow, I've called Pipo and Sand to bring them here. My only worry at the moment is his high fever, which shows no sign of easing up.

"Arm."

"P'Aaarc...I want to sleep." the smaller guy mumbles without looking at me, burying his face in the pillow and covering himself with the blanket,

I squat down and stroke his soft hair to comfort him before kissing his face in adoration. Arm whimpers, insisting on sleeping. Eventually, he has no choice but to wake up because I slip my hand into his shorts.

Damn! He's fast as fuck when it comes to this.

"Why are you always messing with me?"

"I'm not messing with you, just trying to wake you up. Come eat. You can sleep later."

"I can't sleep."

"Why not?"

"I have an exam tomorrow. I'm doomed."

"I'll tutor you."

"Can you? What if I fail?" Wow, I want to throw my certificate of academic excellence at his face.

"What a brat. Eat as much as you bark. Get up!" I demand and slowly lever him up. I set a large pillow against the headboard for him to lean on and slide a small pillow under his butt.

I know it hurts and he'll have to endure it for days. It was Arm's first time, but I'm willing to take care of him every single time as it's one of my happiness.

Ten minutes later, I bring a bowl of porridge to the bedroom. I sit on the edge of the bed and put the spoon over the smaller guy's mouth. Seemingly disliking it, the brat glances at the porridge and me back and forth briefly before whining.

"Porridge again?"

"There's nothing else you should eat. It's easy to digest. This is shrimp porridge."

"Where are the shrimps? Are they minced?"

"Will you eat or not?"

"No coriander." All right.

"I picked it out. Open up."

"No chives."

"Okay. Will you eat now?"

"Blow on it."

"Are you messing with me?"

"No. Look at the smoke. What if it burns my tongue?" His mannerisms relieve me. His temperature isn't as high as before and now he keeps bickering. I suppose he'll recover soon. Does he think the Superior Prince can't tell he has the energy to be cheeky now?

Arm eats much more than he did at lunchtime and takes the pills obediently without whining. I let him rest while wiping every inch of his warm body with a wet towel, then I take care of my business.

I wake Arm up again at eight. He opens his eyes groggily and remains quiet as he listens to me.

“Let’s study.”

“What about you? You have an exam tomorrow, too.”

“Don’t worry about me.” This is never my problem. Besides, I’ve reviewed all my lessons. That’s why I had time for sex. I will not reveal that information to him, though.

“P’Arc, I’m sorry.” Oh, shit. A twist. What’s with him?

“For what?”

“I’m a bother. I...”

“I’m the one causing you trouble. You’re hurt all over yet still worried about me.” I guess this is another reason I like him so much. He cares about others even when he’s unwell.

“I don’t want to make you feel bad.”

“I only feel bad when you’re hurt or sick.”

“Cool as fuck.”

“Wanna fuck?”

“That’s not what I said.” I laugh at the sight of the colors spreading on his cheeks. He’s fucking cute. Everyone on campus must be jealous of me.

“Scoot. I’ll tutor you.” I switch the topic before my imagination runs wilder.

“How do I scoot? It hurts. You move the small table to the bed.”

“Why the table? It’s troublesome.”

“What do we do, then?”

“That’s why I told you to scoot.” Not explaining further, I slide behind the smaller guy, lean on the huge pillow, and pull him into my embrace.

The delicate figure rests over my chest, his small body fitting in my arms. When my nose brushes his soft hair, I'm on the verge of losing control.

"Are you uncomfortable like this?"

"I'm good. Take a look at this problem. You did it, right? I'll show you one more time."

I pick up an exercise sheet with one hand and a pencil in the other and extend them before the smaller guy to teach him. I prop my chin on his head after some time, smelling his pleasant scent while tutoring him.

"What's the answer for this one?"

"Thirty-two."

"Correct," I say in encouragement. Arm looks up and flashes a smile, proud of himself.

"But this one is wrong. You miscalculated it from the beginning."

"You taught me that way."

"The fuck? You evaluated it wrong and messed up with the calculator. How can you blame me?"

"Ugh, that must be the calculator's fault. It's broken."

"Not funny. Do over." I let him lean on my chest and restart the math problem until he gets it right. Sick, Arm isn't as quick as usual. He zones out occasionally and takes time, but it's no big deal.

"Did I get it right?"

"Yeah, you did."

"Fucking easy. A piece of cake." You brat.

"My piece is getting hard right now."

"Fuck off."

My private part threatens to harden, especially when his butt grinds my crotch. Daaaaaamn, I'm dying to bite him in his neck. I only hold back since I'm the highly moral Superior Prince.

I have no clue how much time has passed, but I never wish to let go. I want to hold him like this until morning. But well, it's impossible. Before I know it, Arm falls asleep atop of my chest with no warning.

"Arm, one problem left."

"..."

"Arm."

"Hmm..." I shake my head and watch the sleeping guy with swelling emotions. I love and care about him dearly. I wish to possess and protect him. I assume this is the feelings lost for a long time that I've finally discovered.

"Sleep well. Good night, Arm. I..."

"..."

"Love you."

[The God of Fire: End]

My body is nearly in pieces by the time the final exam is over. More importantly, I hardly returned to the dormitory because my third-year peer mentor clung to me, making me stay over at his apartment with my aching butt for a week. At least he treated me like a king. I woke up and just chilled with every meal served to me. What a dream life of Anon.

The last subject has ended today. I've fully recovered from my first time with Arc, so it's time to go back to my room.

Sand and Pipo have been acting weird lately. They would act strange and exchange smirks when they were with me. When I asked, they refused to answer. I've kept the question in my mind until now, and today I must uncover the truth.

CLACK!!

I turn the doorknob and enter the room to find both my best friends playing games on their phones. I greet them as usual.

"Hey."

“Awwwwwww, Arm is back. You know Po has been sleeping on your bed.”

“Do whatever you want.”

“What brings you here?” Sand asks enthusiastically.

“Can’t I come to my room?”

“Well, P’Arc is possessive of you. You were also sick. I thought you wouldn’t come back to your friends anymore,” Pipa chirps with a knowing gaze.

What the fuck do they want from me?!!

“Let me ask you something. Did you take good care of my idol back there?”

Shaking my head, I drop my backpack on my desk. I proceed to sit on the edge of my bed and stare at those two in perplexity.

“Say what you have to say!”

“No one can hurt as much as yourself~”

“Go sing in hell.”

“Why are you so angry? Come on. It’s nothing. I just wonder that for all this time you were at P’Arc’s apartment, did you...” Pipa points his index finger into Sand’s circling finger. Fuck, these guys...

“What?”

“You’re dating the Superior Prince. Tell us what happened.”

“Nothing happened. We were studying together.”

“Really? How come you got sick?”

“I fell off a motorbike.”

“P’Arc doesn’t have a motorbike. A fanboy like me knows everything. Why would he pick you up with a motorbike when he had a car? Quit lying.” Wow, the more they speak, the angrier they are. I get jolted several times until I have no choice but to...

Tell them a new lie.

“Okay, I admit it. P’Arc broke his perfume bottle and stepped on it, and I got sick from the cold water.”

“Whoooooa, you’re saying it like you’ve never showered in cold water. There’s no hot water in our dormitory and you were fine.” The interrogation is unyielding. My options continuously decrease.

“I’m not lying.”

“You’re shifting your eyes around. Just admit you and our idol fucked.”

“...!!”

“And you went as far as to do it in the restroom in the university,” Pipó accuses, and my heart plummets. Where did you get that ideeeeeeeeeee? He was applying ointment on me. We didn’t do it.

“We didn’t do it in the restroom.”

“But I heard it. You moaned in the stall. I felt bad for my idol even more. Stay away from him.” This is getting out of hand. They aren’t pressuring me out of love for me. They’re just nosy and care about their Superior Prince.

These motherfuckers, pieces of shit.

“We didn’t do it in the restroom. What made you think we would do that?”

“I heard it,” Pipó insists firmly. “P’Arc told you to turn around.”

“Right.”

“I was pooping and trying to hold my fart because I didn’t want to disturb you guys with any noises, and then you moaned like...Ouch, be gentle. Oh, oh, ah, ah, not too deep. Ooooh, I’m getting chills.”

“Dumbass, we didn’t do it. He was putting ointment on me.”

“What kind of ointment is used in the restroom?” Another question. Is he a police officer?

“An ointment for wounds.”

“I don’t buy it.”

"Look at my mouth closely."

"Sure. Come on!"

"We didn't do it in the restroom."

"But you did it before that, didn't you?"

"Right. Oh, wrong!"

"Awwwwwwwww~~ You didn't even deny it. I'm blushing. I'm so shy, Sand." Pipo wriggles pretentiously, leaning on Sand's shoulder. I knock him in the head. Damn, I hate that I got tricked by these guys. I believed I would get through it, but I lost.

"You're misunderstanding." I break off, feeling sorry for myself.

"We're not. Don't worry, though. Po knows, the world doesn't know."

"Right. The world doesn't know, but Sand does." Jeez!!

"No one knows besides us. Friendship is beautiful. We're proud that you finally got laid," they say, fake crying. I hate them. Should I kick their asses?

"Was he good at it?" asks Sand, grinning so widely his gum almost falls out.

"Well, yeah."

"Did he talk to you sweetly?"

"No." It's Arc we're talking about. Why would he be sweet?

"No way. Be honest with us. I might borrow his tricks to use with P'Waan," Erm...

"There's none." I pause and organize my thoughts into words. It's been bugging me for an entire week, and it's time to voice my worry. "Are you...disgusted with me?"

"Arm." They become serious. It feels like we're in a judgment room.

"I don't know if I did the right thing, but I love P'Arc. It'll be nice if you accept me the way I am."

"Why wouldn't we accept you? We were just joking about being possessive of P'Arc. It's not true. We were worried about you. It's great to know he loves you so much." How peculiar of Sand, being more sensible than ever. Meanwhile, Pipo...

“As for me, it’s normal for lovers to fuck, right?”

You prick...

“It’s only natural. I can accept you whether you date a girl or a boy because you’re my friend. As to P’Arc, I’d still admire him even if he dates another boy. His image doesn’t change according to his sexuality.”

“Thank you for understanding and for still being nice to me.”

“You’re still the same. Why would we treat you differently? One condition, though.”

“What?”

“Don’t fuck in the restroom. It’s loud in there.”

“I said we didn’t do it in the restroom!!”

“Aw, you’re flustered.”

“I’ll play games in Yo’s room. Don’t bother me, or I’ll beat your asses,” I growl and stride toward the door, hearing them tease me nonstop.

“Aw! Yo’s room or P’Arc’s room? Are you hurrying back to do homework? Wow... how many rounds will it be?”

“I’ll prepare Counterpain for you. Hehe.”

Stupid.

Somehow I feel relieved. I was worried about the secret I’d been hiding, afraid Pipo and Sand would change due to my romantic relationship with Arc. That’s not the case, apparently... I was overthinking it.

They’re still my friends just like the first day we met.

It feels fucking amazing. I’m so lucky to have such understanding friends.

“We’re having a meal with all the Angel Gear Code on Sunday.”

Arc walks out of the bathroom naked, drying his head with a towel. The sight makes me paranoid. I can never get used to this.

The final exam season has ended, and yesterday was the first day of school break. Most students went home to ask their parents for money. Arc, however, locks me up here in his apartment. He's good at persuasion and pampering me.

"P'Yeepoon texted me about that." I'm going home next week. This week, I'm stuck with my third-year peer mentor.

"My friend called." Arc opens his closet and puts on a casual tee and pants.

"What did he say?"

"He invited me to watch a soccer match at Bang-on Pochana."

"Oh, you should go. I'll stay and watch TV." All my friends have gone home, leaving me alone with this horny man.

"I'm taking you with me."

"Not going."

"Why not?"

"Your friends would tease me." About my tendency to lose and our relationship. It's been some time, yet I can't get used to it. Plus, only a few people are aware of us dating. I'd rather not draw attention and get teased.

"They won't. Besides, I don't wanna leave you alone."

"I'm good. I can be alone."

"Go take a shower, or do you want me to shower you?"

"I'll do it myself."

I won't let him repeat himself. It's safer to be obedient because my first time took a toll on me and drained me for days with only porridge to eat. I feel sorry for myself.

I end up watching the game with the third-year guys and getting disheartened since my team loses again. They tease me like crazy before consoling me with beer, and then Arc and I go back to his apartment.

Sleepy and lazy, I hop onto the bed and pretend to fall asleep. Arc, without a word, removes my clothes, making me open my eyes to observe the situation.

“W...What are you doing?”

“Changing your clothes. It’s uncomfortable to sleep like this.”

“Oh.” I close my eyes again in drowsiness. Who would have thought he would play with my body?

“You jerk!”

He’s doing it noooooooooooooow.

“Waaaaaah, what are you doing to me?” I hate that I moan as he swirls his fingers inside my back entrance. My stomach tenses, my body feeling the gentle electric shocks, spasming.

“It won’t hurt this time, I promise.”

Promise what?! I’m wide awake now.

Look at me. Where are the new clothes? Arc tossed mine on the floor. My legs are spreading for the tall guy to insert his fingers into me.

“P’Arc...”

“Hmm?”

“P’Arc, love me.”

“I’ll love you to death.”

It’s not like thaaaaaat. I want to slap my mouth for wording it wrong.”

“Hic, s...spare me. I’ll be exhausted tomorrow. I want to eat fried pork with basil. If we do it...I won’t be able to eat it.” I pretend to cry and make him feel bad, but...

“You’re so squeezable. I can’t take it anymore.”

I didn’t expect my attempt to make him feel bad to backfire.

I’m startled when Arc’s firm part enters me.

Like the first time, it's all so tight that I can't move. His firm part is stuck inside as I cry. Even the lubricant gel doesn't help, no matter how much of it. It takes tremendous effort to go forward.

"P'Arc, d...deep."

"Go...deeper?"

I mean the opposite, you bastard.

"No. Hic, too deep. No more. Waah..."

I said it was too deep, but he thought I wanted him to go deeper. Holy shit.

Our sex excludes the typical inhaler this time because Arc replaces it with a green compound herb inhaler. It refreshes me with a shock, keeping me awake throughout the thrusts. What a wild ride.

I fucking hate him, but I can't deny the change of the sensation. It feels better. I'm aroused and excited by our lewd activity. My reaction remains the same: I hug the tall man and moan.

It doesn't end in bed. I don't remember how many places he's carried me to, but we've done it on the couch and the balcony, and eventually we lie flat on a doormat in front of the bathroom. Right! The thing you wipe your feet on. Arc tripped on the clothes and we fell down. My butt aches so much that I can't stand up while Arc collapses atop me.

That's the end of our lewd activities.

Call him handsome or cool or whatever. At the end of the day, Arc is Arc. He still sucks.

The morning begins like the first time. My body feels discomfort and soreness all over, especially my backside. Which was pounded relentlessly by the greedy guy. I have no strength to move.

Good thing I woke up in bed. Beside me, the guy hugs me in his arms. I can't do anything but admire his charming face closely for some time with my eyes half-closed.

"What are you looking at?"

“What? I’m not looking. Can’t you see my eyes are half-closed?” I jeer, pushing his broad chest away. My body feels a twinge of pain that brings me to tears right afterwards.

“Just admit you were looking. I don’t mind.”

“Yeah, I was looking. I was looking at a mean guy. You hurt me again.”

“Hit me, then. Hard.”

I immediately slap his chest two times for revenge. Seeing me calm down, Arc places the back of his hand on my forehead like he has done before.

“You’re warm, not burning up like last time. I’ll cool you down with a wet towel and give you medication just in case.”

“If you don’t want me to get sick, don’t be rough.”

“But I’m horny.”

“I’ll buy you sex toys.”

“I don’t want sex toys. I want to do it with the one I love.”

“Don’t love me, then.”

“What a crybaby. I guess we have to do it again tonight.” I gape at him in silence.

Never challenge the god of fire. I’ve learned my lesson. Arc’s patience is low when it comes to sex.

“I’ll fight you if you do it.”

“You think I’m scared?”

“I...I’ll tell Mr. Rungson.”

“Good. You definitely will.”

“Don’t challenge me. I’m a man of my word.”

“I’m not challenging you. My dad will be here.”

“Huuuuuuuh?” His father is coming here. Holy crap...

“W...When?”

“Tomorrow.” As I said, although our relationship didn’t start long ago, Arc was so serious that he talked to his family about us. I just haven’t met his father yet.

As for my family, I already told them when I was certain about my feelings, and they didn’t mind. They just don’t know who Arc is, what kind of person he is, as if he’s as great as I boasted. Therefore, it’s kind of awkward if our parents are involved.

“Call your dad so we can all talk.”

“No.”

I was planning to show my parents Arc’s photo upon my return this time. I didn’t think Arc would suggest this.

“What are you afraid of? I did well with my dad.”

“What did he say?”

“Nothing. He just slapped me.”

“P’Arc...” Dread seizes my heart. “He can’t accept us?”

“No. I told my mom where he hid the money.”

Fuck. What an unhinged jerk.

“Everything will be okay. If we don’t get it over with, it’ll stick with us. We won’t be able to move forward and it’ll be hurtful to step back. Let’s get through it together.”

“Will we be able to?”

“Do you love me?”

I hold Arc’s gaze. “Yes.”

“I love you, too. And because I love you, I want to make everything clear. What about you? Are you not sure about me? Are you going to hit it and quit it?” Why would I do thaaaaat? I know how much he’s crazy about me. Damn...I’m mad.

“Very well. I’ll call my dad over to talk.” My mother isn’t a problem. She loves me so much that she spoils the shit out of me. As for my father, if he’s okay with this, everything will be okay.

I drag my weary body out of bed. And in the late morning, it’s time to call my father. Since mr. Aniruj is a senior engineer, I remind him to dress well for the best first impression for both parties.

The next day at ten, my father arrives at the lobby early, and Arc volunteers to welcome him. When they enter the apartment together, I see they get along well to an extent. A good sign.

“Please take a seat. I’m sorry that my dad isn’t here yet.”

“It’s okay. I’m too early.” Once my father sits on the couch in the living room, I scurry over to hug him and get flicked in the forehead. The topic is nothing special. He complains about how rare I visited home and roasts the hell out of me to the point I pity myself for being nagged in front of Arc.

Knock, knock, knock.

The mood abruptly shifts. When the knocks start again, Arc walks over to open the door.

TA-DA!!

That’s the moment I met the Superior Prince’s father in person.

Mr. Aniruj is in suit and tie, with a Rolex and leather shoes. Meanwhile, Mr. Rungson is in a Calvin Klein tee and casual knee-length shorts like this is his home. He marches inside with a deadpan face.

The contrast is insane.

“H...Hello.” I rise and fold my hands over my chest respectfully.

I study the imposing older man and understand why Arc is incredibly charming. Their genes are strong. He’s tall and fair with an experienced aura. A highly respectable elder.

His emotionless face sends me chills. I turn to my father with a question in my eyes. What do we do, Mr. Aniruj? Are you going to lose to a man in a tee? Show them what you've got.

"Hello," replies Mr. Rungson. He puts his shoes on the rack and steps inside solemnly.

"You must be Mr. Rungson. I'm Aniruj, Anon's father." It sounds formal like a school budget letter.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Aniruj. I'm Rungson, Anol's father."

What the hell? They basically said the same thing with switched names.

"Take a seat, dad. What do you want for a drink?" asks Arc. The elders sit facing each other like they're about to discuss a truce.

"Beer." My father drinks juice, while Arc's father asks for beer at ten in the morning. Sigh.

"I don't have any beer."

"Wine, then."

"I have water and pomegranate juice."

"Why the heck did you ask, then? Give me whatever you have." Ooooh, they're the same. Composed and quiet. Fierce when speaking.

Once the beverages and snacks are ready, it's an important moment led by Mr. Aniruj and Mr. Rungson, who never grants Arc or me a chance to interfere.

"I was surprised when Arc mentioned his boyfriend. He hadn't dated someone for so long that I wondered if my son had gone insensitive. Now that I've gotten to meet his boyfriend, I'm glad. Arm seems like a good kid."

"Awwww, Arm is a naughty boy. He pooped in his pants in kindergarten and got teased by the whole class. I had to get off work in the middle of the day to pick him up. What a headache." Ugh, dad, did you even prepare my great traits to boast? I've never told anyone about that. How dare you?

"Your family seems fun, Mr. Aniruj."

“Haha. It’s typical of us, Mr. Rungson.”

Their full names stress me out. Don’t they have nicknames? I’d like to hear those.

“How many children do you have?”

“Just one son.”

“Hmm? Aren’t you protective of him?”

“I am. I always gave him a call to check in on him, but then I realized he had grown up when he got into university. He must rely on himself now. It’s impossible to be protective of him all the time. How do you treat your children, Mr. Rungson?”

“I let them be.” Damn!! How cool.

“ ... ”

“I’ve given them the freedom to do whatever they want since they were kids. I have three kids. Arc is the youngest and has always been unpredictable, so I’m fine with him dating.”

“That’s great. I’m awesome with that as well.” Do people still talk like that? Oh, I forgot, this is my father.

“Still, we have rules and prohibitions.”

“For example?”

“Arc must study hard. We set the standard. If he fails to meet it, his allowance is cut off.” I doubt Arc cares, given how he always hides money in different corners. I found three thousand baht in the instant noodles cabinet the other day.

“Arc must not steal.” He took my workshop shirt from the tree last month, Mr. Rungson. I would’ve still been a fool if Copp hadn’t revealed it to me.

“He must not lie.”

He lies all the time. He made love with me right after saying he wouldn’t. Your son is a liar.

“He must not gamble.” We gambled on the last game. The loser paid for the booze. Ugh... “The rest is his responsibility. It was about girls before. Now that he has a boyfriend, I suppose he’s thought it through.” Mr. Rungson offers me a smile.

How handsome. I bet the girls were smitten with him when he was in university.

“We also don’t push expectations on our son. As long as he grows up well, that’s enough. I only wish for him to be an engineer.” Mr. Aniruj begins describing his happy family life.

“You shouldn’t force your preferences on your kid. Let him study what he wants,” Mr. Rungson points out.

“I asked him. He likes it.”

“Haha.” I smile along.

“Arm, what’s your specialty after one year of studying engineering?” asks Arc’s father. I roll my eyes in contemplation.

“I enjoy changing light bulbs. Pretty good at that.”

Everyone laughs.

“Good. Come change light bulbs for this dad sometimes.” Whoa! Mr. Rungson addresses himself as a dad to me. I’m almost moved to tears. Dad, it’s your time. Show off your coolness now.

I poke my father’s arm nonstop, and the respectable engineer steps up.

“What about you, Arc? What’s your specialty after studying for three years?”

Arc goes quiet for a few moments before answering firmly.

“I was good at nothing during my first two years. But in my third year, my specialty is flirting with your son.”

What the fuck~~~

“Haha. You’re a funny guy, Arc.”

“He takes after me. What do you say, Mr. Aniruj? Do you have any concerns about their relationship?”

“No. I love whoever loves my son loves as long as they support one another and stay reasonable when encountering any problems. That’s all.”

“I agree. They’re old enough to choose their own paths as long as it doesn’t cause anyone trouble.”

“Excellent. I’m happy if my son is happy.”

“Arc is handsome. Very boyfriend material,” Mr. Rungson states plainly.

Mr. Aniruj quickly replies. “Arm has a nice personality. He’s funny and good-looking like his father.”

The boasting between the two fathers has begun. Let’s see who will win.

“Arc is smart. His grade was 2.89 last semester.”

“Arm might not be brilliant, but he changes light bulbs so well he would be the champion if it was a competition.”

“My son was insaaaaaaaanely popular in high school. Girls called him day and night and during meals. His handsomeness was such a nuisance.

“Wow, Arm was no different. Girls called him when he was eating to do group assignments together at their places. Haha.”

“Yeah. My son is handsome like me.”

“Arm got my looks as well.”

“My wife is gorgeous. She was Campus Princess twenty years ago.”

“My wife was a nursing cheerleader. Super popular.”

“I got my wife with my looks.”

“My wife fell for my looks as well.”

“Really?” asks Arc’s father, tilting his head. The silence is deafening.

“ ... ”

“I was kidding. I’m that type of person. I hope you take no offense.”

“None taken. It meant nothing.”

They hold each other's gazes, their eyes sparking electricity, until one of them grins and speaks like a little boy.

"You mad at me?"

"No."

"Let's make up, Mr. Aniruj."

"We've made up, Mr. Rungson."

"We're family now. Let's love each other."

Let's love each other. I'm confused as fuck. Who's hitting on who? Arc and me, or Mr. Aniruj and Mr. Rungson? Ugh!

Arc and I see our fathers off to the lobby. In the descending elevator, they chat heartily. I have to go home with my father for the day since my mother has been asking about me. I'll find time to return at night. And, of course, the one going crazy is Arc.

"Let me hold your hand," he whispers in my ear, taking my hand without waiting for the answer.

"Our dads are here."

I'm nervous despite our whispers.

"They're chatting."

"I know. I'll be back tonight. Tidy up your room."

"Okay."

"Do you have plans with your friends?"

"No. I'll wait for you."

He sounds like a possessive boyfriend. But well...it's kind of cute.

The elevator reaches the lobby. Arc uses the chance as our fathers turn their backs to give me a kiss. Brief but imprinted in my heart.

DING!!

The door opens and our fathers walk out. Arc and I follow them with red ears. We chat for a few moments before splitting up. Mr. Rungson goes one way while my father and I head another way.

But please, I haven't even stepped out of the condominium when my phone chimes. The thing is, my phone is in my father's hand.

Fuuuuuuuuuuck!

"Arc! Arc!" My father shouts. Arc turns around.

"Yes?"

"Why did you text Arm? We just split up."

"Ah..."

"I have a question..."

"..."

"What game are you playing? I don't get it."

'I miss you. I'll play you like crazy tonight.'

Chapter 19

A Grand Confession

[The God of Fire]

The official university break is short. Just one month before the second semester starts. Many students went home, and so did Arm and I. Everything was supposed to be great. I mean, it would've been great had the brat spent some time with me. However...

He's been with his family without thinking about me. I had to pray every time I tried to set a date with him. Oddly enough, I used to be single, seclude myself, and sleep alone with no problem since I valued my privacy. Everything changed after Arm. And a while after dating him, I got addicted to him more and more.

The scent of his hair after being washed, his smooth skin under my hands, and even the moan in his sleep soothed me. But now...

I can only cuddle his pillow and smell his lingering scent to console myself to get through each night.

For fuck's sake...

If my friends ever find out, they'll tease me forever. I'll never let them know!

Rrr...!

I grab my buzzing phone from the nightstand to find Bloom calling. Fuck! Yo must be so free to call me at three in the morning.

"Hey."

[This is not Bloom. Is this Arc speaking? Care for a fling?]

That's all it takes for me to hang up. Annoying!

He calls me again in a minute. I pick up and get berated like usual. This is the dynamic of our group. Ridiculous and annoying. We curse and call each other again and repeat without really having a serious fight.

[Why did you hang up on me?! Can't you let me speak in a high-pitched voice?]

"Use that voice to Copp and Pond!"

[So cold...]

"Will you stop?" This motherfucker.

He's like this because I wrote down my phone number on the activity form in my first year and someone leaked it. My life after that was in chaos with tons of non stop calls, mostly flirtatious. The worst was when someone offered to pay me to sleep with them.

It was extremely troublesome to survive that situation. I changed my number and built my walls up. It's one of the reasons I hang out with few friends and avoid people.

Ah, that was a long rant. Let's get to the point tonight.

[Okay. Where are you?]

“Home. What do you want?”

[When are you coming back? The guys and I are planning to celebrate at Bang-on Pochana on December 31st. A countdown with beer like the other years. What do you say?] I lean on the headboard, suddenly recalling my past years in university.

I usually spent the countdown with my family every year. But in the past two years, I spent the evening with my family, and celebrated with my friends after. We never held back with the booze and went all out to the point I pitied my state. It wasn't awful. I'd share memorable moments with my friends every year if possible, but...

“I'm thinking of doing the countdown with Arm alone. A romantic date, you know?” I love this boy a lot and wish to be with him on the last day of the year.

[Oh, no problem with that. Bring him. Bang-on Pochana is fucking romantic.]

“You guys drink booze like water. I don't want him to witness a hideous scene.”

[What the fuck? Arm never sees us in a decent way. There's no image to keep.]

Ah...The brat has never experienced their ultimate drunkenness on a New Year. It's out of this world.

Hesitating, I'm unsure how to reply. I let Bloom blabber for another twenty minutes.

Let me sleep. I'll be humping the pillow while thinking of my boyfriend at four in the morning.

[Come on. It's the important time of the year.]

“Yeah. I'm okay with that. But let me ask Arm first.”

[Awwwww, Arc, you're so cool.]

“Use that voice in hell.”

[Give me Arm's number]

“To convince him right now? In your dreams.”

[Ugh~ You're so onto me. It's settled, then. I don't think you need to ask him because he must go. See you on the 31st. Bye now. I'm so sleepy.]

“Next time, call me during the daytime.”

[No can do. This is the best time. I’m distracting you from the thoughts about your boyfriend.]

“Who’s distracted? Bulshit!”

[I’m your friend. Why wouldn’t I know? Call him if you miss him. What are you torturing yourself for?]

“Fuck off.”

[Whatever. I’m going to bed now. Sick of a stubborn prick.] Bloom hangs up, leaving me gazing at the light cascading through the window.

He can always tell. I didn’t really think much during the call, focusing on the topic. Now I’m all alone and the wild thoughts reenter my mind. I miss Arm even more.

I toss and turn for nearly half an hour. My patience worn thin, I turn on the lamp and call the troublemaker, who is probably asleep.

I lose track of how long the ringback tone goes before I hang up upon Arm’s silence. I don’t want to wake up the brat and possibly irritate him. To my surprise, my phone vibrates as he calls me back.

Fuck. It feels wonderful.

[Hey, why did you call?] His voice is groggy. The raspiness makes my heart flutter.

“Nothing. I just wanted to chat. Can you turn on your camera?”

[Why? The lights are off.]

“Can’t I see your face?”

[No. You woke me up. I called you despite being sleepy. How are you not going to take responsibility?] He’s whining. I’d kick his ass if he was here.

“Come to me and I’ll do whatever you want.”

[My dad said to leave next semester.] My hope is crushed. Mr. Aniruj is behind all of this. Should I ask my father to step in? Whatever. I'll leave that for later. Right now, I'm going to focus on Arm's voice. As he sounds pitifully drowsy, I decide to let him rest.

"Go back to sleep. Sorry for bothering you." Damn! Am I at the point of apologizing to my boyfriend with a sad voice? Damn me.

[T...That's not what I meant.]

Oh, he's flustered now. This is going to be fun.

"I'm bothering you right now. You're annoyed, aren't you?"

[I'm not. I'm just sleepy.]

"That's why I told you to go back to sleep."

Arm goes quiet. Soon later, a notification chimes in on my phone. I can't help but smile because the brat finally video-calls me.

[Don't be mad. I can't sleep anymore.] Look at him lying on the bed in a loose shirt and fluttering his eyelids at the camera. Wow, how am I supposed to suppress my boner? Has he no idea this is flirting? The dim yellow light from the lamp only makes it more lewd.

I feel like hiding in the dark and jumping out to bite his lips.

I'm going crazy. Calm down, Arc. Calm down...

"I'm not mad. How does telling you to go back to sleep mean I'm mad?" Arm flips on his side and rests his head on the pillow, tearing up. He's good at shit like this.

[I didn't want to turn on the camera because I look like crap. And my hair is messy.]

"You're right."

[So is my face.]

"You just knew that?"

[That's why. I didn't want to video-call because you wouldn't like my face right now. And when I didn't, you got mad.] Arm licks his lips while speaking, continuously melting my heart.

“You think I wouldn’t like your face? I’ve seen all of your expressions. I’ve seen worse than this.”

[Wanna fight in person?]

“In bed, yes.” Fuck! He’s licking his lips again. “Arm.”

[Whaaaaaat?]

“Don’t lick your lips.”

[My lips are dry in the winter.] It’s winter, but he curls up in a blanket with his AC temperature at 22 degrees celsius. This fucking brat.

“Take care of yourself.”

[Mm...]

“Go back to sleep.”

[Okay.] The brat replies, pressing his cheek into the pillow, showing only half his face. It’s enough for me to see his cuteness. How did I fall head over heels for him like this?

“Good night,” I whisper, looking at the boy on the screen with all sorts of emotions. I love and want to take care of him and mess with him all at once. “Won’t you say something?”

[You too. But I’ll have a better night, of course.]

“What a pain in the ass. Can’t you speak nicely for once?”

[Good night.]

“That’s it? You suck.”

[P’Arc...I’m sleepy...]

“Okay, I’m done messing with you. Hang up.” So hard! He’s as bratty as ever.

[You didn’t bother me, actually. Thank you for calling.]

“ ... ”

[Arm...wants to kiss you.]

Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck!

[Can I kiss you like this?] Arm presses his lips to the camera and withdraws.

What a flirt. He's flirting so hard that my body keeps twitching.

His smile disappears from the screen soon, yet my heart still pounds. It was his first time addressing himself with his name. I didn't expect that. Everything has changed.

Instead of feeling at ease after talking to him, I...

I end up dashing into the bathroom to release my tension. What about the kiss? I'll kiss the wall for the time being. When he's back, I'll definitely lose it.

Arm, you're fucking cute. I want to play with you a hundred times a daaaaaaaaay!

December 31st (four hours before the New Year)

Bang-on Pochana is open for business as always, crammed with students. More boys than girls like usual since this bar usually broadcasts soccer games. Today, however, it's for the New Year's celebration.

"Ooooooh, look. Lots of students from our department." Arm's eyes widen as he follows me inside.

We've spent time together almost all day. I picked him up at his house to have a meal with my family. Knowing their son planned to hang out with his friends, his parents booked tickets to celebrate the New Year together in Hong Kong, leaving their only son in my care. A win-win situation.

"Arc, Arm, come on."

I turn towards the familiar voice automatically to find all my friends already there. Jet and his gang have also joined us. It's livelier than any festival.

"You're late," Copp says lightly.

"The brat was busy dressing up." Arm sulks immediately.

"Nonsense. I'm casually dressed."

"Reaaaaaally?" My friends tease Arm, given his favorite shirt, jeans, and designer sneakers. The guys and I, on the contrary, are in tees, soccer shorts, and sandals. Perfect for the New Year.

“Stop staring at me. I’m begging you as a good-looking person.” The smaller guy sits and glances around the table before asking, “Are you going to shower in this? What’s with this amount of booze?”

“This is normal. We usually went harder than this,” says Pond, smirking.

“You’ll have cirrhosis.”

“Ugggggh, no worries. We’ll die before we have that.”

“I’m sick of you.”

“What are you yammering about, nong Arm? Let’s have a drinking competition,” someone starts. Like usual, we celebrate with alcohol.

“Last year we showed them how strong the engineering folks were. If anyone wants to duel, today is your chance. Get away from me if you’re drunk. I don’t speak to losers.”

“Nong Arm, don’t lose to us tonight,” says Pond, making me slap my forehead. Worried Arm won’t be used to this New Year’s tradition, I open my mouth to stop him. But it’s too late because the brat plays along.

“All right!”

“You sure?”

“Yeah. I’m the god of alcohol.”

“We won’t believe you until you prove it.”

“Bring it oooooooooon!” A mixed drink is slid forward. Arm flashes me a smile, clicks the glass, and downs it in one go.

“Slow down,” I warn, unable to help it.

“Drink with me.”

“Okay.” I sip on my drink casually. I usually go wasted, but I’m holding back now as I have to take care of my significant other.

“You suck.”

“I don’t.”

“Show me what you’ve got, then.”

“I’ll show you all that I’ve got at my apartment.” Arm is speechless momentarily before cracking a laugh. He quickly switches the topic. What a brat.

“Woooooow, you’ll wait to drink at your apartment. That sucks. I dare you to drink with me.”

“Who will drive if I’m drunk?”

“Use Grab *(car ride service app, like uber)*”

“Arc, are you scared? Come on, you always chug it down like water. Don’t hold back on New Year’s Eve. Cheers!” I fucking hate my friends. Now I have no choice but to drink with them, but I refrain from overconsuming it. The happy time continues for hours until the last moment before the New Year. The atmosphere lightens up.

“Five, four, three, two, one. Happy New Year!!”

BOOM!! BOOM!! BOOM!!

Dozens of fireworks explode in the sky. The atmosphere is even livelier with alcohol increasing in our systems glass after glass. The drunkest one is Arm, who can barely keep his eyes open.

Gone is the romantic moment of the New Year. He can’t even stand straight.

At two in the morning, everyone is wasted. I carry the smaller guy to my car and drive slowly, still sober. My friends left already, having no reason to stay after fueling themselves to max limits with alcohol.

“Lie down.” I adjust the seat so he can rest comfortably. Arm’s fair face is red in strips from all the booze he drank.

“P’Arc, my head hurts.”

“You were naughty. I told you to stop, but you wouldn’t.”

“No more. I won’t...drink anymore.” I let him whine, focusing on driving. I want to take the smaller guy to my apartment as fast as possible before he feels worse. His contorted face indicates his body can’t stand it anymore.

I hate myself for not trying my best to stop him. When he sulked and blinked pleadingly, my heart melted. I won’t allow that ever again.

“Whoa! Shit!!” I swear soon later. Fuck, a police checkpoint!!

The sleeping guy isn’t a problem. I’m the driver. Despite being sober, I might get in trouble.

“Open the window,” demands a police officer. I lower the window slightly and he flashes the light inside.

“Wow, your car reeks of alcohol. Come get a breathalyzer test.”

“I need to take him home. He’s the only one drunk,” I blurt out the excuse since Arm looks terrible, my back sweating.

“No. This won’t take long. It’s not wasting much of your time.”

It can’t be helped. Let’s leave it to fate.

“Arm, stay here.”

“Where are you going? Are you leaving me? You’re mean.”

“I’ll talk to the officer real quick.”

“Mm, don’t be long.”

I pat his head in consolation. I pull over by the footpath, unfasten my seatbelt, and queue up to take the breathalyzer test. We’re not the only ones here. All students in this area have been stopped.

“Blow on it,” orders a police officer. I blow the air softly, assuming it will have no effect.

“Blow hard. You’re being suspicious.”

Fuuuuuuuuck, all right! My alcohol level is high.

I'm getting arrested. I don't care about it as I'm more worried about Arm. I open the door to get the squirming guy on the seat and pat his cheek to wake him up.

"Arm...nong Arm, wake up."

"Mmmmm, P'Arc, I'm going to throw up."

"Are you okay?"

"No." I remove his seatbelt and lift him out of the car awkwardly. What happens next is crazy. Arm pukes nonstop, throwing up and crying, making the police officers scratch their heads.

"Slow down. Take a deep breath. Feeling better?" Arm shakes his head. I stroke his back by his side, completely sober. I support his body with one arm under his chest and one hand rubbing his back to help him empty his stomach

"P'Arc, my stomach hurts. My head also hurts."

"You drank a lot. I'll punish you once we're back."

"Are we at your apartment now? I want to sleep."

"No. We're going to the police station."

"Huuuuuuuuuuuh?"

Another person has gotten sober.

The checkpoint wraps up at three in the morning with a lot of intoxicated drivers getting arrested. An officer drives my car to the police station. Arm, though not being charged, insists on accompanying me. Once we've arrived, there are documents to fill out before I will be locked up until someone bails me.

"Waaaaaah, what do I do? What do I do...?" Arm staggers, plops down, and cries pitifully, clutching my arm. I'm concerned about him the most.

"I'll call my friends. Calm down."

I contact the guys just to receive bad news: They also have been arrested and have been trying to get help at the other police stations. Not wanting to bother my family this early in the morning, I decide to stay here for the day.

“Arm, I’ll call for a cab for you to leave first. Come bail me later when you’re sober.”

“No.”

“Don’t be naughty.”

“I...I’ll withdraw some money. I’ll do that.”

“How would you do that, being drunk like this? Do as I say.”

“I don’t want to stay here. I’ll get the money.”

“Arm, what did I say? Listen to me.”

“No.”

“Why are you so stubborn? You want to get punished?”

Arm refuses to comply. Seeing that, a police officer sighs and offers a solution to this helpless situation.

“If you want to bail him out, there’s a taxi bike station nearby. Go withdraw your money. And you wait in the cell until you get bailed. You okay with that?”

“O...Okay.”

“No, thanks. He’s so drunk. I can’t let him wander out there alone.”

“There’s a taxi bike. P’Arc, wait here.”

“Arm!” He wobbles out, worrying me even more.

I’m not even aware of being jailed, my mind is occupied by the other person. Arm is wasted. He could barely speak properly or balance himself, yet he dashed out crying with gritted teeth in order to bail me out.

It sucks making your boyfriend cry. I’m furious with myself. This will never happen again. I’ve learned my lesson. This is the end of the fierce man.

The end of the Superior Prince in the New Year. To all my engineering friends who celebrated together last night, I have one thing to tell you...

Arc and his friends have been jailed.

"Stop crying. We're back together now."

"Waaaaaah, I was so scared. The rider was too fast."

"It's all right. It's okay now." I carry Arm into the bathroom and slowly remove his clothes, kissing his face to comfort him and express my gratitude at the same time.

After Arm darted out of the police station to withdraw money, I counted every second in distress. In that half an hour, I was kicked off the cliff into the bottomless abyss. I was terrified and hurt and worried all at once. Even though he's safe with me now, those feelings have been ingrained in my heart.

"Don't go anywhere."

"I won't. I'll be here with you." Arm flops on the floor and rests his head on my chest, trembling. "Are you going to throw up?" He shakes his head.

"B...But my head hurts."

"You drank too much."

"I'm sleepy too."

"Take a shower first, good boy. You'll get to rest on a soft mattress soon."

"The world is spinning. And...at that time, when I was at the ATM machine, I keyed in the wrong password twice."

"Yeah. I know." The cold water subdues the drunkenness. Holding Arm, I clumsily rub him with the shower cream. All the while Arm narrates his journey. It takes us some time to finish showering.

I carry the naughty boy to bed, dry him up, and put on his clothes, then I give him medication just in case before letting him sleep.

"P'Arc..."

"I'm here." I settle beside him and hug him tightly. Arm groans for a moment before his breathing becomes steady in a deep sleep.

"Good night, Arm. Thank you for caring about me..."

It's almost dawn and I still can't sleep, worried about the state of the boy in my arms. I get out of bed at six to prepare his medications and breakfast. At eight, the delicate boy remains asleep. I check the temperature on his forehead to find his body feeling warm, but I don't wake him up.

Late in the morning, I call my friends. They were bailed out and returned home safely, fortunately. That's a relief.

At eleven, I give the smaller guy a wet towel treatment to prevent fever, which ends by noon. Here comes the tricky part: I'm unsure if I should wake him up to eat or let him sleep. In the end, I choose to toughen up and wake him to get fed.

Arm gets up groggy, his eyes swollen from all the crying. I feel bad and amused at the same time, laughing while feeding him because, as always, he never misses a chance to whine. I break a sweat tucking him in again.

Taking care of him doesn't feel troublesome.

On the contrary, I'm happy to take care of the one I love. It's been a while since I fell in love or developed feelings for someone. Everything changed after I met him. I want to be a better person, calmer, and learn to do the right things, which is fucking amazing.

The naughty boy doesn't leave the bed all day, and I don't step outside my apartment all day. Yet, the loving atmosphere makes this bad day bearable.

"You've slept a lot today. Wanna watch some TV?" I lie down on the bed, blanket myself, and pat Arm's head.

"No."

"You want to sleep?"

"Yeah."

"I'll turn off the lights, then."

"Okay."

Darkness envelops us again. Draping his arms around me, he buries his face in my chest and mumbles in a quivering voice like on the verge of tears.

"I'm sorry for troubling you. Am I a bad boy?"

"I don't mind at all. Don't overthink it. Just don't be naughty to me."

"Pay me back twenty thousand for the bail."

"You brat."

"Deduct it with my debt that night."

"Which night?"

"The night we went to Bang-on Pochana together. Don't you remember? It was 1,470 baht."

"That's a different occasion. Let's not include it."

"Why?"

"It's up to me. Go to sleep so you'll feel well enough to bicker with me tomorrow."

"Good night, P'Arc."

"Yeah. You, too."

"I love you."

Fuck! How am I supposed to handle my boyfriend's raspy, loving voice? Am I elated? Does my heart swell? No. I just get perverted thoughts, but I can't do anything but embrace him. In the middle of the night, I flee to the bathroom to masturbate and shower myself in cold water to cleanse my mind.

By the time I feel better, my skin is all wrinkly like chicken feet. I return to bed and attempt to keep my distance from my boyfriend. However, he rolls over and hugs me, not letting me get away.

I'm doomed!

My efforts in the bathroom are fruitless. I'm melting...My heart goes weak, unlike my lower part.

Fuck, I want to hold my boyfriend.

But I can only kiss his forehead and force myself to sleep, making the end of my fabulous life.

[The God of Fire: End]

I wake up a dozen times more refreshed than yesterday. I could barely move my body, but now I might do an aerobic dance to show Arc how strong I am. But since he's still asleep, I just stretch.

The tall guy usually wakes up first. I wonder why he's still sleeping like a long under the blanket, only his hair sticking out. Well, I leave him like that, not wishing to disturb him, and wash up in the bathroom.

The small kitchen has packs of cereal and cartoons of milk, so I prepare myself a bowl and enjoy it right away.

After breakfast, I tiptoe back into the bedroom and watch the sleeping guy for a while before deciding to wake him up to eat something. But when I pull off the blanket, I see Arc in an awful state. His face is pale and I can feel the heat from his body. I touch his neck and realize he has a fever.

My heart plummets. Since we knew each other, he's never looked worse.

"P'Arc..." I shake him gently.

"..."

"P'Arc, wake up. L...Let's go to the doctor. I will...carry you." That's physically impossible. I can't even continue. How am I supposed to lift a guy over ten centimeters taller than me? The easiest way would be to drag him off the bed.

I'm in troubleeeeeee. I've never taken care of a sick person before. My head is empty. Since Arc shows no sign of waking up, I call my best friend, Sand. He picks up right away, which relieves me.

[What's up?]

"Sand, P'Arc is sick."

[Ooooooooooh, what did you do to my idol? Answer me. Did you do something perverted to him? Noooooo.]

"Calm down. Watch your mouth, asshole."

[P'Arc is a fucking tough guy. How could he get sick?]

"He is. Will you focus?"

[Call your mom.]

"She's in Hong Kong with my dad. I don't want to interrupt their sweet time. That's why I called you." She worked hard at the hospital. I'd rather not ruin all the fun now that she's on vacation. What a grateful child I am.

[How is he?] Sand exaggerated about the soy milk last time, yet I consulted him again. Sigh.

"His body is burning up and his face is pale. He wouldn't wake up."

[Probably just a fever. Give him a wet towel treatment and medication. If he doesn't feel better, call me. I'll help you take him to the hospital.]

"Thanks a lot."

[Keep me updated. I'll call Po.]

"Okay. Thank you again, man."

[No problem.]

The epic mission has begun. I look at the tall guy for a few moments before leaping out of bed. I clumsily rub his body with a wet towel. This is bad. The damp towel gets warmed up after touching his body. The situation is increasingly concerning.

Arc must've gotten a fever because he was busy taking care of me. I feel terrible.

"Arm..." He slowly flutters his eyelids open.

"Hey, you're up. Waaaaaaah." I throw my arms around him, but he pushes me away weakly, taking me aback.

"You'll get sick. Stay away from me."

"I'm not scared. You'll just have to take care of me. Does it ache anywhere? How are you feeling? I forgot to ask how you felt yesterday. I'm such a horrible boyfriend."

"Relax. I didn't get sick because I took care of you. I'm not feeling that bad. Just a mild headache." Arc sits up, but I try to push his firm shoulders back down with a threatening snarl.

"Lie down. I'll rub your body with a wet towel one more time."

"Are you ordering me now?"

"You're naughty."

"Who is? Think again."

"Okay, I am. You have to deal with my naughtiness by lying down." Not arguing, Arc obliges, allowing me to give him another wet towel treatment. "Go back to sleep if you're sleepy."

"I'm not sleepy. I enjoy watching you."

"I'll show you my cooking skills."

"Wow, you want to kill me?"

"How could you underestimate me? I'll do my best. It's the thought that counts."

"Okay. Okay."

"It'll be edible."

"Just do it. We can throw it away if it's not."

"That's hurtful." Maybe my face is sulky, given Arc's smile. Well, he loves messing with me. The angrier I get, the more delighted he is.

I march back to the small kitchen and view the ingredients in the fridge before preparing cooking tools to make porridge. Of course, Anon barely cooks in his life. My simplest menus are omelets and instant noodles. Today, I level up by making porridge with minced pork.

After considering everything, I start. I pour water into the pot, add rice, vegetables, and minced pork, and stir until they come together. Ah... How much soy sauce do I add? Unconfident in my skills, I turn off the electric stove and transfer the pot to the bedroom.

"P'Arc." He turns his handsome face to me and asks a question in a low voice.

"Taste it." I stop by the bed with a pot in one hand and a ladle in the other like a lousy chef.

"Put it in a bowl before giving it to me."

"I can't because it's not done. Give it a taste. I'm not sure if it's too salty or if I should add anything more."

"All right, let me try." Smiling, I scoop the porridge, blow the heat away, and put the ladle to the tall guy's mouth. Arc tastes at the tip and speaks a moment after swallowing the porridge.

"It's bland. Just add a bit more soy sauce."

"Really? Wow, I'm so talented. I'm good at changing light bulbs and even cooking."

"So full of yourself."

"Just admit you're shy by how well I'm taking care of you."

"I'm shy?"

"Don't make me point it out."

"Then don't."

"Yes, I will. Take a look. You need all five nutrients, so I chopped up some broccoli and put it in." Arc glances at the pot with an inscrutable face.

"I'll choke on it and die. Why don't you just put the whole thing in if the chunks are huge like this?"

"I can put the whole thing in?"

"You brat."

"I'm so scared."

"They don't add broccoli into porridge."

"Oh, I do. And you must eat it."

"Are you trying to kill me?"

"No. I'm worried about you. If you don't feel better, you'll have no choice but to eat my food. How horrible is that? Get better soon so you can have something nice."

"I'm touched. Let me kiss you."

"No can do. You're sick. I'll catch your cold."

"You're talking back?"

"I'm speaking the truth. Be right back. It'll be ready in ten minutes." Arc smiles the smile I like so much. I can feel his love and adoration toward me. Damn it. No matter how highly I act, I always lose to this person.

I finish cooking and carry a bowl to the sick guy in the bedroom, then I feed him and prepare his pills. I'm uncertain if he feels better now, but I hope the fever subsides.

In the evening, I give him another wet towel treatment and order food delivery, unwilling to witness his suffering face as he eats what I cook. The day passes by in a not-so-terrible way. Arc is sick, and I'm more than happy to take care of him. The thought of us growing older and still being by each other's side like this years later sounds pleasant.

"Arm, let's go to bed."

"Wait. I'm thinking of a menu to cook for you."

"Just order it. I'm begging you."

"No. You eat my food for breakfast."

"I'm not eating a whole broccoli."

"No worries. I'll make congee with kale."

"Who puts kale in congee?"

“Me. You’ll get vitamins from it.”

“Will it kill you to stop messing with me? Do whatever you want. Now go to bed.”

“All right.” I turn off the lamp on the desk, spin back to the bed, and get comfortable under the blanket. Arc leaves a gap between us to prevent spreading the cold to me, so we can’t cuddle tonight. I gaze at his charming face quietly.

“I know you got sick from taking care of me. Thank you.”

“How do you know?”

“Just guessing.”

“No, I didn’t get sick from taking care of you. I got sick because I stayed under the cold water for too long.”

“Oh, why did you do that?”

“I wanted to have sex with you.”

“...!!”

“But I couldn’t because you were drunk. That’s all.”

“P’Arc, you son of a bitchhhhhhhh.”

Give me back the time I’ve been worried about you!!

The second semester starts. As I’ve transferred all my stuff to Arc’s apartment, it has become less spacious. Regardless, it feels warm in a different way.

Pipo and Sand have moved to the same apartment outside the university, looking exhilarated. On this first day, they’re already having breakfast at the engineering cafeteria this early in the morning.

“Hey, in high spirits today?” I greet both of them, sitting in a chair.

“Of course. Sand is dating P’Waan, and my dating life is going well. Hehe,” Pipo pipes so annoyingly that I’m itching to kick his butt.

“Good to hear that. Introduce her to me when you have time.”

“Sure. In exchange for the Superior Prince’s clothes.”

“Fuck you.”

“I want to sniff it.”

“Go be a pervert somewhere else, Po.”

“Just kidding. I’m serious now. Let me ask you something. Have you ever sniffed P’Arc?”

“What the heeeeeeeell? Why would I do that?”

“Oh, you’re dating. Have you never?”

“Go be a perverted bastard in hell. I’ve never done that,” I growl, raising my voice. My friends drop the topic and munch their food while laughing. I’m a virgin, okay? We can be a virgin anytime as long as we stay delusional.

“It’s kinda cute, though. You and P’Arc don’t look like boyfriends,” Sand points out.

“Why?” I ask him in puzzlement.

“To outsiders, first, you and P’Arc haven’t officially announced your relationship. Only people in the circle are aware of it. Second, even though I know, I think you two look more like brothers or friends. You’re not lovey-dovey, but...it’s kind of cute.”

“What do lovers do, then?”

“They fuck. Break the record and do some more.”

“Kyaaaaa, I wonder if P’Arc is fast like the Flash.”

Fuck, why did I even ask these guys?

“Just kidding. Lovers are supposed to be lovey-dovey. You have meals, watch movies, cook together, and post photos to boast about your love life, especially photos in bed.”

“Bullshit.”

“Up to you. We’re just suggesting it.”

“I can do everything, but photos in bed? No way.”

The Lovey-Dovey Mission: Step 1...

Arc is asleep.

After showering, I clothe myself and hop onto the bed.

Drained from the activities for the third-year students, Arc was knocked out upon arrival. I use this chance to scoot closer, rest my head on his firm shoulder, and elevate my phone.

Turn on the front camera and...

CLICK!!

I take a photo.

Let's see.

"Shit!" I swear at my hideous faceeeeeeeeeeee. Arc is the only one looking handsome while sleeping, attractive in every angle, while I look like shit.

It can't be helped. I delete it even before anyone asks.

This method doesn't work, it's neither romantic nor perfect to brag. No one will be jealous of me, and they will laugh instead. They will even wonder why someone like me is in the same bed as the Superior Prince. Ugghh.

The Lovey-Dovey Mission: Step 2...

"P'Arc, I want to watch a movie."

"What movie?"

"I don't know. I'll check it out. Are you free?"

"Yeah. Check it out. I'll pick you up in the evening."

"What a sugar daddy."

"Well, I'm rich." He never denies it, both narcissistic and easy to flatter.

"Let's book normal seats. I want a change of scenery." Besides, I don't chew popcorn that loud. Arc just messed with me before.

"Okay." We split at the walkway between buildings.

We reunite again in the evening, to my excitement. Well...we get all lovey-dovey by having dinner together, and I add some food to his plate. I'm blushing. I never imagined I would come to this point where I shyly act this way.

Late at night, we go to the cinema and book two seats in an empty row. The theater isn't packed as it's not a famous movie.

"Want to drink that?"

"No. Tell me if you want to." We lift the armrest that's between us to be close to each other. Arc holds a cup in his hand while I have a bucket of popcorn.

"Not now. It's a bit strange today."

"Why?"

"Not many people watch the movie. It's like we're the only ones here."

"No."

"Huh?"

"Here they are."

Fuuuuuuuuuck, I hate this world.

Right on time. A large gang of students are seated in the same row as us, robbing us of all privacy.

Where do I find a romantic moment with my boyfriend? Should I hold his hand? It's not a good idea to do that in front of high schoolers around us.

"Arm."

"Hmm?"

"The movie started."

"Yeah."

"It's okay."

"..."

"Let's book special seats with only the two of us next time."

I'm dissatisfied with the current situation, but I absolutely adore his caring side.

The Lovey-Dovey Mission: Step 3...

Cooking.

A good boyfriend must be able to cook and do it well.

"What do you want to eat?" I ask with enthusiasm after we've arrived home on Friday evening. Tomorrow is a weekend with multiple activities that I've planned, but it's a special dinner for today.

"I'm fine with anything," replies Arc plainly, taking off his workshop shirt and hanging it on the couch.

"No. Say a menu."

"Can I eat you? I'm craving that."

"Perv! I mean food." We haven't had sex since he railed me after the exam. I'm not rejecting him, but it's not a graceful time to initiate it. That's Arc's job.

Well...at least not in this situation.

"I want pizza."

"No."

"Fried chicken wings, then."

"That's hard."

"How is it hard? Just order it." His charming face frowns.

"I'm showing you my cooking skills today."

"Hello. What's up, Copp? Wanna go out to eat? Sure, sure."

"Hey, stop that." What a paaaaaaain. I mentioned cooking and he pretended to be on the phone. How can someone be like that?

See? Arc's image differs from who he actually is, and I'm lucky to witness the sides he hardly shows. Arc is playful, funny, and warm. He can be very horny at times, but that's okay.

"Do whatever you want."

"Really?" I tug his arm, drawing a laugh out of him.

"Yeah."

"Tell me what you want to eat, and I'll make that."

"What about an omelet?"

"Sure."

"Fried pork with basil?"

"Yes."

"Make two portions of those. I'll cook the rice."

"Okaaaaaaay."

An hour later, we're at the dining table, looking at the Anon with No Debt's dishes that look similar to dog food. Dog food actually looks more appetizing.

The omelets are mostly burned and the pork with basil is a mess. The pork is uncooked and all oily. The sweetness could cause diabetes. Feeling guilty about all of this, I flick my eyes up at the tall guy and mutter sheepishly.

"What else do you want to eat? I'll make it."

"You sure?"

"Yeah."

"Instant noodles, then."

"Okay."

"With one egg. Can you do that?"

"Yessssssssss."

The Lovey-Dovey Mission: Step 4...

Stargazing.

"P'Arc, why don't we stargaze on the balcony tonight?"

"Sure."

"I'm glad Let me go get a mat and a blanket." Arc nods. "Should we bring cookies and hot cocoa?"

"Are the cookies handmade or store bought?"

Fuck. He doesn't trust me.

“Store bought.”

“Okay. Take a shower with me, then we’ll gaze at the stars together.”

“You shower first.” I always get attacked by his rough hands when we shower together.

He’s horny in there.

“Let’s shower together so we can scrub each other’s backs.”

“Rub it against the wall.”

“You think you can stop me with those words? You can’t get away.” Ugghhhgh, it’s tiring even if we don’t go all the way. He fondles, kisses and gropes me until I melt in his arms, his specialty. I bet he will thrive if he becomes a porn star.

We’re out on the balcony at eleven with cups of hot cocoa in my hands. Arc has a plate of cookies, gazes up at the sky.

“No stars...” I mumble on the verge of tears. “I forgot to check if the sky cleared up. What do we do?”

“Let’s look at the city lights, then.”

“Okay, let’s do that.”

No romance nor sweetness the way lovers are supposed to have. Only a disaster. I can blame nothing but my and the Superior Prince’s sucky fate...

The Lovey-Dovey Mission: Step 5...

Watching Arc play soccer.

It usually took soooo long, like four to five hours, as if they would play nationally. Lately, they reduced it to a couple of hours before leaving their separate ways. Arc would be free in the evening to hang out and have fun with his friends. Likewise, I would spend time with Pipo and Sand.

We sometimes gather and hang out together (with no drinking). We haven’t touched alcohol since those guys were locked up on New Year’s Day.

But one thing I routinely do, like before, is watch Arc play soccer. Never turning up empty-handed. I would bring water, refreshing towels, and energy drinks for the Superior Prince. Today is more special since I bought him a flower.

I keep it in my backpack, hiding it from others.

A bunch of girls are seated beside me, most of them are the players' girlfriends. Those students and girls kill their time in their own ways.

Arc plays soccer with his friends for a long time. During the break time, the tall guy strides off the field toward me with Copp by his side.

"Nong Arm, what brings you here?"

"I have nothing to do." I pass a water bottle to Arc.

"Can I have some water, too?" Copp pleads amusingly, sounding fucking pretentious.

"I'll go get one for you. I didn't bring extra since you always bring your own water." I rise to buy more water, but Arc seizes my wrist and hands the bottle to his friend.

"No need to. You can drink half of mine."

"How kind you are. Let's meet up when your boyfriend doesn't notice."

"No. You're annoying."

"But I'm sexy."

"I'm not playing along today."

"How could you say that to your secret lover? Hic, you heartless jerk."

"My boyfriend asked why my secret lover looked like crap. I didn't know what to say."

Ugggggh, go play somewhere else. I can't take this. What's with this fake drama?

By the time the secret-lover show is over, the romantic moment I dreamed of is ruined.

Copp soon runs off to mess with Bloom, leaving the Superior Prince to chat with me.

I didn't expect much. We don't need to talk as long as I get to take care of him as I hoped.

"You have my support today. It tastes good like usual, with a bit of my saliva."

"Wanna fight?" Arc ruffles my hair and silently drinks the energy drink. "Are you going to wait until I'm done, or are you hanging out with your friends?"

"I'll leave first."

"Okay."

"P'Arc."

"Hm?"

"We're dating, aren't we?" I suddenly want to slap my mouth. Think before you ask, stupid.

"Yeah."

"We are dating, yet it doesn't look like it. Am I confusing you? I mean, I'm not a very good boyfriend. I can't do what other people can. Last time I made you instant noodles for dinner, so it felt like..." Arc cuts in before I finish.

"We're good the way we are. No need to be like others."

"..."

"What are boyfriends to you? Being sweet? Having special meals every day? It's not like that. You're the comfort zone in my life. However terrible my day is, I feel at ease coming to you."

"..."

"My peace isn't complicated. We don't have to force anything. Just live your normal life. I love you the way you naturally are, okay?"

"O...Okay." It's like he knew what I'd been attempting to do all week but kept his mouth shut until I brought it up myself. "I'm sorry. I was afraid you'd stop loving me if I was like that."

"Nonsense. Why would I hit on you if I didn't love you?"

Right. I forgot. I was too fixated on making our relationship lovey-dovey to realize we were already doing great.

"I'm not good-looking to the point of making heads turn like you are."

“ ... ”

“My family isn’t that rich. My academic level is average.”

“ ... ”

“But I’m happy to have such understanding parents, and I’m fucking happy to be in a relationship with someone like you.”

It’s confession time. My heart is racing. Well, I should excuse myself now.

“See you at the apartment. Oh, here’s my backpack. Take it back home for me.”

“Why don’t you do it yourself?” asks Arc in confusion.

“There’s something for you inside. I’m off.”

“Okay.”

I stride off. But before I even step out of the field, the low voice calls my name. I halt and turn toward the source of the sound.

Arc holds the red rose I bought him in his hand.

Everyone in the field stares at us. The world stops with only Arc and I moving.

The tall guy runs toward me and offers me the red rose.

“It’s yours,” he says.

“No, this...I bought it for you. It’s yours.”

“It’s ours.”

“ ... ”

“For us, who belong to each other.”

“Gooooooooosh, I’m sick of lovers.”

“Get the hell out of here, will you? Love fucking stinks.”

Ignoring the teasing, I lock my eyes on the guy in front of me and decide to accept the rose from his large hand. Right...we’ve always belonged to each other.

Chapter 20

Engineering Makes Us in Love with Each Other

The special moment of Anol Paraminphisan...

My life is simple like others, absolutely no different, yet everyone says similar things to me. That I'm not the same since I own something more extraordinary than many: being good-looking already makes me different.

In a world where beauty is a privilege, I've always been treated well and received great things before anyone. I am accepted without having to prove myself. I am recognized and mentioned. Only a few knew it was just a façade.

I have true friends, though it took me a long time to find them. I still remember that day. My first participation in a university activity.

A freshman like me didn't expect much. I just needed a few friends to enjoy the activity. To my surprise, everyone wanted to know me. Everyone approached me with shared intentions. They saw my face, greeted me, and befriended me. Some wished for more than a friendship...which was fucking hilarious.

Why did they assume I would have a good personality like my looks? I was a jerk.

It was fun at first, getting to know new friends, but I lost myself as time passed. Why would I have plenty of friends whose names I couldn't even remember? I thought. It was a small turning point that evoked my desire to isolate myself and build my walls up.

Until a big turning point urged me to finally seclude myself from everyone.

I didn't think my phone number would be so desirable that everyone would jump for it. Call after call after call. I changed my phone number several times and still got nonstop messages. All my social media accounts linked to my number were bombarded.

I vaguely remember losing my mind. All I knew was how exhausting it was to get through it.

Enough.

I was fed up with things like that. I lived my life and associated with a few groups of people.

I changed my number again and deactivated all my social media accounts before signing up to new ones. I accepted friend requests only from those I knew and was close to. Love was out of the question. Since I was the type to be serious about relationships, it wasn't easy to start one. My walls were more indestructible than anyone's.

That was the nature of my love. As I said, I wasn't the best person. I would break up with them if we weren't compatible. Being an asshole that I was, I never fought for fragile relationships and simply let it end. My relationship in the first year began and ended quite quickly, and I didn't plan to be in love with anyone again.

To be honest, I enjoyed being alone. I hung out with my friends, watched soccer games, and repeated, which was nice.

'Arc, when will you get a girlfriend?' The most asked question from those in the same department. They claimed I had options. But how many people would accept me the way I was?

'She's super cute and very nice.'

My friends spoiled me all the time, pairing me with any cute girls, impressed by the snacks they bought me, and pointing out how nice they were. They weren't wrong. I was glad to be treated well, but I wasn't into them. It felt like they were forcing themselves and trying to please me when it was unnecessary.

For some people, they didn't have to do anything...and I would fall in love with them.

That was what I'd felt for the past two years until my encounter with someone altered everything.

His name was similar to mine but with a ridiculous meaning.

Just an innocent-looking freshman.

He was a real pain in the ass yet so bright.

We met for the first time at the peer mentor selection, though he wasn't aware of it. Only a few people knew I was there.

How did it feel that day? I didn't fall in love at first sight like in a novel, but I knew that...

[Peer Mentor Selection Day]

"Arc, let's go watch the selection," suggested Copp, carrying bags of snacks for his future first-year peer mentee. Pond and Bloom were no different. Why were they so dramatic? One person added to the gear code wasn't that big of a deal.

"Not going. Deliver something to Yeepoon for me." It would be crowded and I would only end up being the center of attention. I'd rather avoid it.

"What is it?"

"Grout."

"What?! Don't tell me you bought that for your first-year peer mentee."

"Yeah."

"Dumbass. No can do. My hands are full. Just go watch it."

"It's boring."

"Staying here under the building is boring as well. This is an important day. Aren't you curious about who will be your peer mentee? Maybe...they're your soulmate." Listen to his bullshit. He already paired me up with someone because of my indifference.

"I don't care."

"Come on. Just to see who they are and then you can leave. You don't have to stay there until the end."

Before I knew it, I was at the back of the room, quietly watching the selection.

"Sakonchai, your peer mentor gear code is 0128."

"Yeah!!!"

“Praeploy, your peer mentor gear code is 0036.”

“Kyaaaaaaaaa, that’s the second-year engineering Prince. Damn, I’m jealous.”

“Kungfu, I love you.”

The atmosphere was lively. Students of all years were excited to welcome their new members. So was the Angel Gear Code. Spotting Yeepoon waving her arms around with her friends, I couldn’t help shaking my head.

Jet, your girlfriend is unhinged. If I were to date someone, I would avoid someone like her.

“Next line,” announced a staff member.

“Whoaaa, look at the boy at the front. He’s tiny like a puppy.” Bloom’s words urged me to shift my eyes to the line of freshmen walking out.

None of them looked like a puppy except for...the first three.

“What major?”

“Electrical.”

The box of lots was extended toward someone. Everybody was watching, and soon the code was announced with a cheery response as usual. Eventually, it was this boy’s turn...

“Damn, he’s cute,” said Copp.

“How?”

“Look at his lips, cheeky stance, and bored face when he reaches in. Haha. No one dared to act like that,” As my friend remarked, that kid actually did that. I could tell he wasn’t defiant or rebellious. He was just a cheeky person.

I had met a lot of people like this. They were nice to hang out with.

“Anon, your peer mentor gear code is 0498.”

“Whoooooooooaa,” hollered the sophomores across the hall. The freshmen turned their heads back and forth. Yeepoon soon got up and made her way to the front with a sash and a marigold garland.

"Is the world small, or is it fate? Wow! His name is so similar to yours, and he's in your gear code." My friends blabbered, but I ignored them, focusing on the freshman's small face.

"Don't mess with him. He's cute."

"His eyes are popping out. Funny." I had no idea what he was hearing or if he was shocked his second-year peer mentor was an Engineering Princess to have that reaction.

"Arc, your first-year peer mentee is cute. I'm jealous."

"Aren't you going to say anything?"

I turned to my friend. "What am I supposed to say?"

"How you feel. Are you happy, sad, content, or annoyed?"

"None."

"Well, Mr. Anol, please share with us your feelings about your first-year peer mentee."

"I want to squeeze him."

"What the heeeeeeeeeeeck? Are you nuts?"

Ignoring the guys beside me, I fixed my eyes on the boy at the front. Shortly after, a new line of freshmen flowed out and the line with that boy returned to its place.

Yeepoon sauntered back with a smile. Her eyes widened upon noticing me, and she strode over and chirped her greetings like it was such a rare occasion to find me.

"P'Aaaaaarc, what brings you here?"

"I tagged along with my friends. I actually didn't want to come," I said levelly.

"Come on, it's fun. I'm glad you're here. Hey, did you see our new peer mentee? He's so cute and tiny," she said proudly, though the boy didn't look tough like the other guys in our gear code.

Check out Jet's and my calves. They could crack ribs. Now look at that freshman. How is he supposed to fight anyone with that slender body?

"What's his name?"

"Hm?"

"The peer mentee. What's his name?"

"Oh, it's Arm."

"All right. Give this to him." I handed over a bag of grout to my second-year peer mentee.

Yeepoon, confused, glanced up and asked a question.

"What is this, P'Arc?"

"Grout."

"Don't mess with your peer mentee like that."

"I'm not messing with him. Just pass it on. I'm leaving."

"Oh, aren't you going to greet him first?"

"No, it's not that important."

"Okay. Thank you so much, P'Arc. I'll call you when P'Jet sets the date for a meal." I nod, not uttering a word. My friends were waiting to find out who their peer mentees would be, probably hoping for some cute girls. They would need to stand here for some time.

"I'm off."

"What the fuck, Arc? How can you ditch us?"

"I'm sleepy. I'll be going to bed. See you tomorrow."

"Hold up. Let's talk first. What's your peer mentee's name?" Copp pressed on.

"Why do you care?"

"Your peer mentee is my peer mentee. I'll buy him a snack at cheering practice."

"It's Arm."

"Awwww, how cute!"

"Can I go now?"

"Yeah. Get the hell away."

I marched out of the room, the echo in my ears subsiding. However, someone's face and name lingered in my mind. I didn't have a certain feeling for this event, but one thing was for sure: Arm, that kid... He's cute.

[Prince-and-Princess Contest]

“Hey, they’re selecting a Prince and a Princess in the activity hall. Is anyone going?”

FWIP!!

All my friends raised their hands, showing their sweating armpits. They seemed interested in the contest when it was nothing. It was just a temporary, unmemorable activity.

Perhaps it was memorable to others?

“Arc, you’re the black sheep again,” even Pond, the nerdy guy, pointed out. I knew exactly what they wanted from me.

“Just go. Why do you need me?”

“There’ll be tons of eye candies. The freshmen are pretty as fuck. I guarantee they don’t suck like Yeepoon, your peer mentee.” She must not know that, or else she would tell her boyfriend and he would beat these guys to a pulp.

“I will not be lured.” I insisted.

“Well, I heard they say your peer mentee is one of the potential contestants from electrical engineering. What’s his name? Arm?”

“When does it start?”

“It started. You going?”

“Wait a sec. I’ll just check it out. If it’s boring, I’m leaving.”

“Ugh, sure. Let’s go, broooooo.”

I watched by the door, not entering. The sophomores and older students were managing the freshmen before selecting contestants from each major. Arm was one of them, of course. He stood at the front in bafflement with the others.

The staff allowed the contestants to prepare their performances, then they started one by one. It took a while before it was Arm’s turn. I wondered why I was staying to watch him.

“The next person to perform is Arm Anon from electrical engineering!”

He was the first from electrical engineering. He stepped onto the stage and things went wrong right away.

THUD!!

“Whooooooooooooa!”

“Ahhhhhhhhh!”

The scream reverberated. I saw his tiny body fall before my eyes, stepping forward by instinct.

Someone shouted. “Somebody take Arm to the nurse’s office. He fell off the stage.”

“ ... ”

“Arm fell off the stage.”

“ ... ”

“Arm fell off the stage!”

Faster, the second-year staff members reached for the boy. I halted and watched several of them carry Arm away from the crowd with mixed feelings. I was neither concerned nor disinterested.

Aside from being silly, you must be stupid. How did you fall off a stage just like that?

“I’m leaving,” I told my friends. They turned to me in perplexity.

“Aren’t you going to check on your peer mentee?”

“He’s well taken care of. Why should I stay?”

“You heartless piece of shit!!”

“So what?”

With a deadpan face, I spun left silently.

It was going to be messy in there for some time and I, who never cared about anything, was unbothered. I went down to the building basement and played on my phone. Twenty minutes later, I called someone. She picked up shortly.

[Hello, P’Arc.]

"Where are you, Yeepoon?"

[The nurse's office. Arm fell off the stage, so I came here to take care of him.]

"I see." I played dumb. "Is he okay?"

[He wounded his knee. It's all good now.]

"Mm."

[Why did you call me?]

"Nothing. I just wanted to."

[Oh, you never do this. Do you want to speak to P'Jet? He's in class, I think. I'll tell him later. He turns off his phone during workshops.]

"No, no. I don't need to talk to him."

[Really? I'll check on Arm now. Is there anything you want me to tell him?]

"No."

[Okay. Hanging up.]

I had nothing to say. Just knowing he was okay was enough to put me at ease...

[The Meal with the Angel Gear Code]

This was the first meal with the Angel Gear Code this year. Jet's treat as always since he is the oldest.

Not in a rush, I simply followed my routine. But since the soccer practice took longer than usual, I called them to let them order and eat first.

By the time I was done and ready to head to the restaurant, my phone almost broke from Jet's persistent messages.

"Sorry, P'Jet. Sorry, Yeepoon. Intense practice," I said as soon as I arrived. I sat next to Jet, opposite my first-year peer mentee. It was my first time being this close to him, and I supposed it was his first time meeting me.

"Oh, P'Arc, this is Nong Arm, the freshman."

"Hey," he greeted curtly, pursing his lips so hard I was dying to bite them. Fuck.

“Seems like a pain in the ass.”

“Not as much as someone here.”

“A cheeky prick like you is a tiny bit less than a delinquent.”

This boy was something else. No one had ever crossed me outright. He was the first.

“Wow, you guys sure get along. Do you know how shocked I was when Arm got our gear code? What a coincidence that your first names are similar. Haha.” Yeepoon switched the subject, sensing the tension. I didn’t mind it and just listened to the brat yammering.

“Similar names? I’m Anon with an ‘N’, meaning a person with no debt.”

What was that ludicrous meaning? Who named you? Fucking hilarious.

“Mine ends with an ‘L’,” I said, and he asked me.

“What does it mean?”

“The god of fire.”

The way he gritted his teeth was satisfying as fuck. We all chatted casually about something else and started eating soon after. At that time, I got a chance to ask the new boy in a rather threatening voice.

“Do you have Facebook or LINE?” Arm looked up from his food to me without blinking.

“My Facebook? Won’t it annoy you?”

“I need your contact for meals with peer mentees or other activities. I’ll block you myself if you happen to be a pesky prick.”

“Armm Anon.”

“Am I supposed to find you just like that? Type it in.” I tossed my phone to him. Seeing Arm stare at the screen for a long time, I nudged him.

“Are you done? Why don’t you eat my phone instead of the food if you’re going to take that long?”

“Done.”

That was his first contact that I got.

We enjoyed the meal and talked for quite a while until we were full. As a tradition, we would take a photo after the meal with everyone in our gear code.

It was known that I wasn't a fan of photography. I didn't fancy having my photos posted and criticized in any way. This was an exception, though, because I was close to my gear code. Not worried, I took a picture of us with my phone.

"Okay. On three, two."

SNAP!!

Everyone smiled happily, especially Arm.

This photo was nowhere near perfect. Only my eyebrow and ear were visible, along with the disgusting, empty pot of spicy soup. Jet and Yeepoon's pretty faces weren't even in it.

The same went for the first-year brat. I remembered he smiled so brightly without a care in the world, yet his face also wasn't in the frame.

Whatever. Despite the photo being imperfect and disappointing, I liked it.

Because it was the first photo...we took together, though we didn't appear together on it.

[The Incident That Made Me Realize My Feelings]

"You're pale. Relax, Arm. P'Arc is always like this."

I heard Yeepoon comforting Arm. Something happened today due to my temper and defiance. A minor accident. My car was dented from the crash, so I contacted my insurance agent and they collected my car for repair. Meanwhile, the other party's car was a hot mess.

I didn't feel bad. They did wrong. Why should I care?

"I was flabbergasted by the crash," Arm quavered.

"The assessment considered it minor," I assured him to put him at ease.

"Whatever. Everything is fine now. Arc, don't ever do this again. It's dangerous to you and Arm. Who would take responsibility if anything happened to him?" Jet cut in after his long moment of silence.

"Me."

I know it didn't bother him to pick up me and our first-year peer mentee, considering the genuine worry for me and Arm in his voice and gaze.

"You can't take responsibility for everything. Be calmer next time."

"Okay."

"I used to be like you. When you grow older and learn to take care of someone, you'll change. Trust me. You don't want to risk them in this kind of situation."

Those words lingered in my mind. I turned around to the boy behind me to find him trembling, yet acting tough, and I felt guilty. Jet was right...One couldn't take responsibility for everything.

I had never been one to overthink or over-worry about everything. I did whatever I wished. If someone took advantage of me, I would fight back for my own justice without caring about anyone. They didn't matter to me. Today, however, everything changed.

Losing my appetite, I glanced at the small brat opposite me several times. Even though he said he wasn't mad, I was angry with myself. It'd been a while since I felt the need to change myself this much. After the incident and my peer mentor's lecture, I finally understood.

"Did you want to cuss me out when I crashed the car? You can do it now."

"I did, but no. I'm not hurt."

"You were just lucky."

"No, I trusted you."

"..."

"You wouldn't hurt me."

That one sentence rocked my world. How could someone trust me that much? The question was rhetorical, yet I had the answer. And it...was getting closer.

Once back at my apartment, I removed my clothes, threw them into the laundry basket, and dragged myself to the bathroom.

The water from the showerhead helped me arrange my scattered thoughts.

When I hit that car and turned to the boy beside me to find him shaking and on the verge of tears, and when we talked before splitting up, I gradually felt it. I should've moved on easily like usual, but it didn't work this time.

After the shower, I hopped onto the bed, grabbed my phone and called someone in my family, my brother. He was a friend, a brother, and someone I sought advice from, though I hadn't listened to him much in the past years.

"Hey, am I a good person?" I asked as soon as he picked up.

My brother went quiet briefly before replying, [What's with you, Arc? Are you possessed?]

"Answer the question."

[You're a good person, but you're too hot-headed and demanding. Do you care about that?]

"I don't know. I had an accident today."

[Yeah. Mom told me about the crash. This is the third time since you got this car.] He continued nagging. My ears went numb from the lecture that I had to endure without a choice as his younger brother. [Did you call me because you felt bad?]

"Yeah."

[Damn, to think you also have this kind of moment. I'm going to cry.]

"Don't be dramatic."

[Im will be proud of you. What made you feel bad, by the way? You usually give zero fucks about everything. Is the other party old? Did you feel bad because of that?]

"No. I was taking my peer mentee to the cinema. He was by my side when it happened. Hey..."

[...]

"What is this feeling?"

[Describe it.]

"I felt bad that I put him at risk, and I kept reminding myself to never repeat my mistake."

[You were worried about him.]

"It's not that."

[Is it more than that?]

Not responding, I listen to my brother explaining on and on. There was one thing...the only thing that struck me, and I began to comprehend my confusion.

[Everyone wants to be a better person for the one they care about.]

[The Incident at Bang-on Pochana]

[Ai'Arc, something happened!]

"What?"

[Come to Bang-on right now. The freshmen got in a fight.]

"They can deal with it themselves. Why would you meddle?"

[Your peer mentee got hit in the head with a bottle. He's unconscious.]

"Huh?!"

[Hurry up!]

"Okay. See you there." I hung up, grabbed my car key, and darted to my car like my life depended on it. When I arrived at the bar, the situation had returned to normal. I assumed they'd settled it just recently, given the other parties were still here.

I glanced around and spotted Pipo cradling Arm, who lay unconscious on the floor, as the others were transferring the injured to the hospital.

My anger intensified at the sight of the smaller guy. Gritting my teeth I asked my friends, "Who did that to him?"

"..."

"I'm asking who did that to him!!!" One of my friends pointed at someone.

That person growled in a low voice. "I did it? Got a problem? That bastard was asking for it. Serves him right."

I lunged toward that guy and yanked his shirt collar. Seeing his challenging face, I lost it. Completely losing control, I swung my fist at his face

THUD! THUD! THUD!

“Ai’Arc! What are you doing? Arc, calm down!”

I didn’t care about what anyone said. Many attempted to separate us but failed as I shook my hands off their grip. Once that bastard who hurt Arm fell to the ground, I stomped on him relentlessly. I kicked and kicked until he was a bloody hot mess.

“Arc, enough. You’ll get arrested.”

“Fuck it! Tell the police to arrest me and state the fine!” I yelled. In silence, my friends dragged me off that dude. I ignored them and stepped toward the beaten guy before crouching down.

I whispered in his ear, though unsure if he could hear it. **“Don’t ever touch my person again.”**

“ ... ”

“If you hurt him, you’ll pay for it a hundred fold. Mark my words.”

[Engineer Friendship Festival]

The Engineer Friendship Festival was held annually in different universities in turn. This year, we were the hosts, making all the engineering students excited. Since we’d been busy with classes, the festival would refresh us, except...

Me.

“We got our buddies. Who’s yours, Arc?” Bloom asked in curiosity, but I remained quiet. “Hey, tell us. Or give us a hint. I’ll help you look for them.”

“Did you find yours?”

“Of course. It’s a dude. Bummer.”

“The possibility is high. Don’t get your hopes up.” I packed up my backpack to leave on my way.

“Won’t you tell us the hint? One question, then. A girl or a boy?”

“It doesn’t say. I’m off. See you tomorrow.”

Not waiting for him to utter another word, I flung my backpack up and walked off. I didn’t care who my buddy was because it didn’t matter. My concern was who was Arm’s buddy.

Protecting my pride and preventing suspicion by not asking around, I kept that question in my mind without unearthing it until the festival started.

Our department became lively and bustling with people, barely having space for the host. Engineering students were everywhere, and I drew quite a lot of attention. It was frustrating at first, yet I didn’t flee. I had to keep my eye on Arm.

“P’Arc, this is from someone.” A younger student from the same university came up with a pink paper bag held toward me.

“Who?”

“Someone from a different university. There’s a note in there. You can read it.”

“I can’t accept it.”

“...” She looked confused.

“I don’t accept stuff from anyone besides my buddy. Can you please return it to the owner?” She took it back.

That wasn’t the first time, and I’d been repeating the same words. Sometimes I wished to announce I had a crush on someone who might or might not like me back. So pathetic.

BANG!

I burst the door open and scratched my head before entering the hall amid the stares with a deadpan face. Okay, I was late, but it wasn’t a crime that I had to receive such treatment.

The hall was buzzing. Soon the MC on the stage called me over to interview me and ask who my buddy was. I actually had no clue who it was since I’d never really looked for them, confident that my friends had searched for them on my behalf. Therefore, when requested to walk to my buddy, I marched forward immediately.

I could only see one person.

My peer mentee. He was cheeky, whiny, and a real pain in the ass to me, yet he was the only one I'd never been annoyed with. The sight of him made my heart flutter as the distance between us shortened. I dropped my gaze to the boy on the cushion, and Arm's eyes widened in puzzlement.

"P'Arc, your buddy is over here."

"MEU students are over here." Amid my friends' shouts, I shut them off and stayed true to my feelings.

"I found my buddy. His name is Arm."

"No. That's your peer mentee."

"No. I want this one."

"Arc!"

"I want this one."

No matter what they said, I loved who I loved. Unfortunately, my friends didn't understand that. They dragged me to the other side of the hall, where my buddy was. Her name was Brink, a cute girl. They said she was popular since she was a first-year Engineering Princess. So what?

I didn't care. I knew someone cuter, and he'd been on my mind for quite some time.

Out of courtesy, I had a meal and chatted with her until Copp leaned over to whisper. I was certain he was aware of my feelings for my peer mentee, though none of us had ever brought it up.

"Nong Arm's buddy is handsome." I turned my head to the other side abruptly.

"So what?"

"I heard he's a Campus Prince. What's his name again? Tongfah...I guess."

"I don't need to know that."

“I’m just saying. They’re laughing and getting along well. Nong Arm is single, isn’t he? If he wasn’t into girls, guys would chase after him for sure. He’s adorable.”

“I’ll give you a thousand baht for you to shut up.”

“Sure.” Despite that, I stood up and stepped away. Copp held me back. “Wait! Where are you going?”

“I’m switching my place. You’re being annoying.”

“Just like that? Well...Where are you going to sit?”

“I’ll sit with Nong Arm.”

“Okay~ Totally okay.”

“...”

“Arc, go for it!!”

“Go for what? It’s nothing.”

But I was about to grab my sword and armor to fight my enemy...

I’d been irritated by a bunch of other things for the past two days. The main problem was Tongfah, Arm’s buddy. Even though he was a year older than me, I wouldn’t hold back. It annoyed the hell out of me when he stuck to Arm’s side. What an annoying sight.

My friends took me to the Prince-and-Princess room since there would be a popularity contest later on. The nosy guys like Copp, Pond and Bloom used me for access to the room.

I was permitted to enter the room because my buddy was an Engineering Princess, and I had to buy her snacks,

Brink didn’t mind, smiling and chatting with us. I received multiple questions until someone appeared in my line of vision. My heart raced in an instant.

The special glass allowed the people inside to see the outside, while the people outside couldn’t see through it. It was entertaining since I got to watch the brat clumsily carry stuff.

Arm, with a huge back of food boxes in one hand, tried to push the door open with the other.

"Haha," everyone laughed, including me.

Unable to stand the sight of the adorable brat like that, I decided to help him.

"P'Arc."

"It's a sliding door, stupid."

I knocked his head gently in adoration and snatched the bag of food from him.

"It doesn't say, 'push', 'slide', or 'pull'. I didn't know."

"You never know anything, being stupid every day."

"What are you doing here, anyway?"

"I came to give my buddy snacks."

"Aw, what if your crush gets upset? Your buddy is pretty." Arm glanced at Brink and grinned innocently. He still had no idea I had a crush on him despite my attempts to hint at it.

"You talk too much. So annoying. Go away." I actually didn't want him to go anywhere. I wanted to hug him. Fuck...

"Telling me off again. What will you do if I don't go?"

"I'll kick your ass."

"How aggressive. Bye, then. Thank you for not minding me." Arm directed the last sentence for everyone else and earned a smile.

After he left, Bloom started, "Nong Arm would've won if he hadn't fallen off the stage."

"It's good that he's not the Engineering Prince," Pond and Copp chimed in.

"..."

"He should be the Superior Prince's, right, Arc?"

"Yeah..."

"Awwwwww, you guys are such teasers," said the others, guffawing. I used the chance to reveal my feelings. Though not straightforward, I supposed they knew I had no room in my heart for anyone else.

"They're not just teasing."

“ ... ”

“Arm actually belongs to someone, and that person is super possessive.”

That Tongfah guy got on my nerves even more and more as days passed. Several times, Arm ignored me and only paid attention to his buddy. He bought him snacks and cheered for him at the basketball game. Everything peeved me, driving me to the edge.

Despite my temper, I'd attempted multiple times to be patient since I realized my feelings for that idiot. But this time...

I couldn't take it anymore!!

Fuck, it was time to get down to business and stop that guy from persuading my person. I'd often felt this ball of fire in my chest. Everything must end today.

With that thought, I demanded a word with Tongfah after the basketball game. I asked Arm to wait for me at the car so I could clear things up with his buddy.

“How do you feel about Arm?” I shot that question without a delay.

“What the hell? How am I supposed to feel about him?”

“Just answer.” My voice darkened, my stomach churning. I tried to keep my voice steady and my composure.

“He's cute.”

The reply made me grit my teeth. “He belongs to someone else.”

“So? Do I need to know that?”

“Do you like him?”

“Yeah. He's cute. Everyone likes him.”

I pushed Tongfah against the wall and ground my voice out of my throat. **“Stay away from my person.”**

“How can I do that when he's my buddy? Seriously, what are you thinking?”

“Are you hitting on him?”

“Wait, Arc, you're misunderstanding. I'm not hitting on Arm.”

"But it seems like you are. What am I supposed to think?"

"Listen."

"Choose your words wisely, or you'll be in trouble."

"Arc, I have a boyfriend."

"W...What?"

"Yeah. My boyfriend goes to another university, and he's here as well. Don't worry." I went silent, feeling humiliation creep in. "I'll call June here to make it clear."

"No need to."

"Hold up. Give me a sec."

I said nooooooooo. Too late. In conclusion, everything was all in my head and I embarrassed myself big time. The Superior Prince's image was obliterated. Sigh.

[When we were apart]

Tormenting. It was terribly tormenting...

Since I confessed my feelings for Arm, we haven't seen each other at all.

He thought I liked Sand. Did he use his ankles instead of his brain to think? Damn! I was so furious, to be honest. I'd done everything for him and confessed my feelings, yet he was helplessly stupid. And so, I decided to avoid him for a while.

Did it make me happy? No. It'd been three days, but I was about to die from not seeing his face.

Even so, I needed to punish that brat and let him know I was mad. Another main reason was I hoped he felt something upon my temporary disappearance. Was he lonely? Did it feel like he was missing something? I hoped Arm would realize his feelings and accept me, though the possibility was still low.

"Arc, I saw Nong Arm today. He looked so bad that I felt bad too."

"Quit mentioning him." Because it'd make me miss him.

I didn't tell my friends what I was up to. But well, they were onto me.

“He waited to see you at the soccer field.”

“Whatever.”

“How can you be this heartless to him? He’s a tiny boy.”

“What does it have to do with anything? Mind your own business. I’m working on an assignment.”

“Very well.”

I tried to shake off my scattered thoughts and concentrate on my assignment, though I was conscious of that person occupying my mind.

A week had passed. The final exam was around the corner, yet I insisted on avoiding Arm. I knew how he was doing because my friends kept me posted. Today, however, instead of giving me updates like usual, Copp asked me for my phone.

“What are you doing with it?” I asked, a bit paranoid.

“My phone is dead. Can’t I borrow yours?”

“Borrow Pond’s.”

“What the hell, Arc? Being stingy to your friend?” Copp sulked in a fucking pretentious way. “All right. I have no right to meddle in your life despite being your close friend.”

“...”

“It’s saddening.”

“Okay, okay. Put it back in its place after you’re done.” He got me with that trick every time. This son of a bitch.

As a result...

He interacted with Brink using my Instagram account!!

You motherfuckeeeeeeeeeeer! I berated the hell out of him. Worse, the interaction was so long that everyone in the department gossiped about it. Regardless, Copp was shameless enough to convince me that he did it for my own sake. That at least it would push Arm to understand his feelings.

What came out of it? Nothing.

I still avoided Arm. I stopped practicing soccer, headed to my apartment right after classes, and refused to have meals with my gear code. This was painful. It hurt every inch of my body. I wanted to see, talk, and hug Arm. I wished to do everything I desired but held back.

"He came to the soccer field again, today," said Bloom.

"Leave him be,"

"Arc, I feel sorry for him. He was about to cry."

"I know."

"Then go see him. At least do it for yourself. What have you been enduring it for?"

"Yeah, I got it."

"When are you going to see him?"

"Give me some time."

"If he moves on and stops asking for you, you deserved it."

I was scared, indeed. I'd rather not disturb Arm during the final exam season, planning to meet up with him later. I didn't imagine my patience would run out now. Unable to stand this longing, I went to the naughty brat at the library.

The freshmen were studying hard. When they gazed up at me, they opened their mouths to shout. I shushed them immediately, and they complied. I sat in a chair and watched the boy nap with his head on the table with mixed feelings. I fixed my eyes on him for nearly an hour until his friends excused themselves one by one. Eventually there were only Arm and I.

I slowly elevated his head and rested it on my shoulder. I let him sleep until his eyes fluttered open. Groggy, Arm blinked repeatedly at me.

And the dam broke!

Arm burst into tears, taking me aback. Upon him whining non-stop, I embraced him.

"You ditched me. You ditched me. You ditched me!"

"You were naughty."

"I wasn't. You ditched me!"

I broke a sweat comforting him until he stopped crying, but it was worth it. It was our reunion after weeks. I got to hug and console him longingly. More importantly...I got to hear the smaller guy's words now that he had realized his feelings.

"I'm jealous, seriously."

He was jealous of Brink, but he had no idea that...

I'm jealous of everyone around you.

[The Love Life of the Superior Prince]

Since Arc and I started dating, we've lived our lives normally. We mess with each other and fight at times, and Arc can sometimes be very horny and devour me in bed until I can't walk. I would be mad for days and then stop completely because he would take care of me to the point I would lose sleep.

Arc's great and trashy traits are out of this world.

But I can accept him the way he is. I'd tried to adjust to him out of love until everything fell into place.

"Arm, wanna watch the final game tonight?"

Sand and Pipo ask me. Even though the final exam season has arrived again with an upcoming big school break, the most important thing isn't study sessions. I'm more interested in soccer. Sighhh.

"Of course. I can't miss that."

"Bang-on Pochana?"

"Okay!"

"What about P'Arc?"

"He's going with his friends. We'll be at different tables." I heard Jet would be there as well and decided not to join them, though we would be close to each other and the bar would be packed with students from our university.

"Which team are you rooting for?" asks Pipo.

"Should I even root for any team? I'll pass this time. Any team can win." Liverpool has been eliminated, so I'm not hyped for the final game. I'm just going to have fun with the guys to wrap up the season.

It's funny. The UEFA Champions League started in the first semester and continued to the end of the season at the end of the second semester. Months have passed.

Throughout that time, I had my friends, peer mentors, and most importantly...Arc became part of my life.

"See you at the bar at eight?" asks my friend.

"Sure."

"Okay. Let's split up. I'll pick Po up at eight. You go with P'Arc."

"P'Arc is meeting with his friends at nine. I'll drive there." Our relationship is unlike others.

We're like friends and brothers with our own spaces. We spend time together and with our friends separately. And I'm happy with the way things are. Neither of us needs to force ourselves to change. If our times don't align or we have personal errands, we can do everything alone.

Arc would just see me off at my car, knock on my head, and chase me away.

No romantic moments. He remains a pain in the ass.

"Don't drive so you don't have to leave your car there when you get drunk. I'll pick you up after Po," Sand concludes.

"Wear a soccer shirt to fit the theme."

"All right."

We separate at the cafeteria. I return to the apartment to shower and dress up as Arc hangs out with his friends. Sand pulls over past seven as promised, and we head on to Bang-on Pochana.

“Whoooooa, Arm, why are you wearing a Liverpool shirt?”

“Because I want to.”

“They’re eliminated. Wait for the next season,” taunts an electrical engineering student.

They’re all here in various soccer shirts.

“I’ll smack each of your mouths with a trophy next year.”

“So scary.”

“‘You’ll never walk alone.’ Got it?”

“Yeah. You don’t lose alone either. Haha.”

Assholes!

I settle in and watch the guys mixing drinks with enthusiasm. The upbeat music and alcohol are a perfect match. Everyone shouts the lyrics along and chats about all sorts of things, wiping away the stress before the exam, the scores on the website, and even the money in their wallets.

“Our seniors are hereeeee,” Yo yells upon the third-year guys’ appearances.

It’s like a scene in a movie where the king makes an entrance with his guards. How can Arc be this handsome?

He’s in his favorite Manchester United shirt, shamelessly wearing it despite the team being eliminated, just like me. He locks eyes on me momentarily before sitting at the long table they reserved. The distance between us is short, and everyone will run around all over the place later tonight.

“The Superior Prince is super cool. I want to charge in and lick his elbow,” my former dorm mates start.

“Come on, his boyfriend is here.”

They all turn to me.

“What? What does it have to do with me?”

“Aren’t you P’Arc’s boyfriend?”

“W...Who said that? How would you know better than me?!”

“Your words aren’t convincing at all.” They all know about my relationship with the Superior Prince. When students from the same department began to find out, the guys came to me and fake-cried, saying how protective they were of Arc. Well, I understood them. Arc is such a cool guy.

“Come on, chug it all down,” I switch the topic. Everyone plays along.

Finally the final game is broadcast.

“Whooooooooooa, my dear Madrid!!”

“You must win this game, Barcelona. You must win!!” It’s the match between the European teams: Real Madrid vs. Barcelona. I get hooked at first, but after some time, I lose interest in the game amid the cheers and turn my head to the tall guy.

Among his friends, Arc sips on his drink and shifts his gaze to me. Soon after, the third-year guys’ table is lifted and slid to ours just like that, but everyone understands the nature of this bar.

“Don’t drink too much.” The tall guy sits next to me and pats my head.

“I know. But I’m a heavyweight.”

“Your lips are moving.”

“And kissable.”

“You’re getting good at flirting these days. Which team are you rooting for?”

“Ugggh, give me a break. Every team I root for always loses.”

“We laid a bet. The losers pay for tonight. You have no choice.”

“I haven’t even paid my debt from last semester.” That situation is hilarious, looking back. They were all messing with me, and luck was never on my side. I was absolutely crushed.

“You don’t have to pay me back. I’ll put it on your tab.”

“ ... ”

“You’ll be in debt for life.”

“Why? Won’t you let me get away?” I ask, my heart drumming, trying to suppress my smile with much difficulty.

“So, which team?”

“Madrid, then. I don’t want to increase my debt.”

“Okay. Arm said Madrid,” Arc informs his friends, turning his charming face away. They all respond in kind...

“Noted, Nong Arm. I hope you win for once.”

“I will.”

Alcohol fills glass after glass as the game continues in excitement. In the second half, both teams go all out until the score is 2-2. Everyone is revved up, cheering like crazy.

“Ten minutes left. Let’s have a drinking competition.” Going nuts, Jet leads everyone to chug down glass after glass.

“Nong Arm,” Arc whispers in my ear.

“Yes?”

“Come with me.”

“Why? You need to pee? Or are you drunk?” I doubt it.

“No. I forgot something. Come with me.”

“You’re acting like a child,” I mutter, still getting up and following the tall guy outside.

“Wait here.”

Arc strides into the parking lot and returns with a book, which he hands to me. The cover looks familiar as I’ve seen it before, yet I accept with no question.

“You’re giving this book to me? Ugh, you could’ve done it on any other day. Let’s go back in to watch the game. It’s almost over.”

“Won’t you read it?” His low voice stops all my thoughts, and I look down at the cover again. It’s not different from before, it’s the same calculus book he gave me the day he asked me to be his boyfriend.

"You want me to take care of it, right?"

"You'll need it next year," he says.

I smile and whisper. "Thank you."

"There's a soccer schedule for this year here. I wrote it down for you."

"You're rubbing salt in my wound." I sulk. Arc laughs, always a jerk. Even so, I open the book to rub it in.

A yellow note appears with Arc's handwriting. I'm so overjoyed that I want to roll around on the ground. Everyone in the world must be jealous of me.

"Shitty handwriting," I tease to hide my blushing face.

"It depends on my mood each day."

"What do you mean?"

"I didn't write it all in one go. I wrote each note on each situation."

"Really?" Unbelievable.

I read the first message...

'I took Arm to the bar for the first time and we gambled to find a loser to pay for the drinks. Since Arm was the only loser, I felt bad and paid the 1,470 baht for him. I didn't want to see someone cry.'

I flip to the next page.

'Liverpool lost again. Has this kid ever rooted for a winning team? I felt sorry for him and didn't know what to do but told my friends to stop teasing him. That was all I could do to help.'

There's more on the next page.

'Totally defeated. Losing continuously. How can someone be so unlucky? I guess I'll comfort him with a meal.'

I recall Arc treated me to a meal after that game.

I flip to the next page. He must've been in a good mood that day, given his better handwriting.

'Arm was wearing a Man Utd shirt. Fucking cuuuuuute. I should've laid that bet from the beginning. I'd wash and prepare the shirt for him.'

And many more.

'Another losing game. The cry baby was whining. I wished to hug him but could only pat his head and tell him to stop.'

I look up at the tall guy, suddenly feeling like crying. I fail to hold it in and end up wetting his book.

"What a cry baby. You only went through a few pages." Arc pulls me into his embrace and rocks my body to comfort me. I love his hug, smell, voice, and efforts to do things for me. I love everything about him.

"Why are you so nice to me?"

"I love you."

"..."

"In the next seasons, I'll continue to write for you. Even if your team always loses, I'll be there to comfort you."

"Promise?" I say in a muffled voice, burying my face in his chest, moved.

"I promise. I'll show it to you before each season ends, like today."

"So, I'll receive your messages every year?"

"Yeah."

"I...I'll write to you, too."

"You'd better spend your time cheering for your team." Fuck! It's almost romantic.

"N...Next year, which book will you write on? The third calculus book is the last one."

"Any book will do."

"Huh?"

"Three calculus books are studied for only four years."

"..."

“But I’ll have you for life.”

“Yeah!!!”

Everyone inside cheers altogether. I can feel their joy even without turning around, and it slowly gets clearer as if those voices drift closer to me.

“Arm, your team won.”

“Madrid, Madrid!”

“Congrats, Armmmmm!” The guys flood outside and dance around before Arc releases me from his embrace.

But my hands still grip on my precious gift.

And yes...

You’ll be mine for life as well

- End -

Special 1

Proud to be Single

Two years before my encounter with the silly brat...

“That boy?”

“So handsome.”

“I heard he studies civil engineering. Super hot.”

“He’s looking at us.” Right! I was looking at them. Oddly enough, they instantly avoided eye contact and pretended to review their portfolios like nothing had happened. It wasn’t the first

time this had happened to me. I lost count. It wasn't terrible, though. I should be happy to be admired, shouldn't I?

"Can I sit with you?" I halted in front of a respectable guy, the only one wearing the university uniform. Everyone else was in their high school uniforms. Did he retake a year, or was it his trick to be accepted quickly?

"Can you hear me?" The guy stared at me.

Realizing he was taking too long, he immediately replied, "Sure."

I sat and placed my portfolio in my lap before observing my surroundings. Today was an interview day. Even though we could be considered nearly a hundred percent accepted, the interview was mandatory.

"Did you retake a year?" I asked the guy beside me to break the long silence.

"Are you an interviewer? I won't answer if you're not."

This guy was something else.

"What the hell? Do you have a problem with me?"

"Whoa, come on. I was kidding. Don't take it too seriously."

"You think that's funny?"

This guy wasn't a typical nerd. He was a cheeky nerd.

"Not funny at all?" I shook my head at that question. "Why would you think I retook a year? I keep getting that question since I got here." He wasn't aware of it, huh?

"You're the only one in the university uniform."

"Oh, my parents were too excited, so they made me wear it for good luck." I nodded.

"Well, I'm Pond, a hundred and seventy centimeters, not disclosing my weight. My left eye has 7.50 D, and my right eye has 7.25 D. My mom couldn't afford contact lenses so she bought me these glasses," he blabbered. Who the hell wanted to know all of that?"

"I'm Arc."

"That's it? No self-description?"

"Why would you need that? Are you an interviewer?"

"Taunting me back? Be careful," he threatened as if I'd be scared.

I was worried at first that I might not have any close friends like I did in high school, but I realized changes weren't that awful. Many were ready to be my friends. And maybe...we would get along better than ever.

"Mr. Parin Yooyuenyong, please enter the interview room."

"My turn. Good luck. I hope they don't eliminate you in the last step."

"Worry about yourself."

"I ranked first in civil engineering." And you'd be the first to get kicked out of the interview room for being an annoying bastard.

I didn't say that out loud. Pond patted my shoulder and dashed into the interview room. Soon, more students sat beside me, where the seats were empty. I got to talk to a lot of them until it was my turn.

"Mr. Anol Paraminphisa, please enter the interview room."

I stood up and entered the room right away. Three professors sat abreast in front of me. They gestured to me to sit and swiftly attacked me with the first question.

"Why did you decide to study engineering?" I supposed this question was required in all universities and used to interview freshmen every year.

"I chose it because I like it."

"Some answered the same thing and got discouraged halfway. What would you do in this situation?" There weren't many options. You either endure it or change the department.

"I'd see how it would be. If I still enjoyed it despite the discouragement, I'd try to get through it. But if I lost my passion for it, I wouldn't force myself.

"You're putting it like the department is your girlfriend."

"I guess."

The atmosphere lightened. These professors actually didn't want to stress out freshmen. The classes and activities were troublesome enough.

"Do you have a role model in this field?"

"My brother. He studies international engineering at the university across from here."

"Why didn't you join him?"

"I got sick of him." They laughed.

"Your score is great. What's your talent?" asked a professor who had been quiet.

"Nothing."

"Nothing at all? The previous student said he was good at Thai dancing. It doesn't have to relate to engineering.

"I'm just...living."

"That's your talent?"

"Yeah."

"Okay. If you insist." I went silent, and so did they. A while later, one of them resumed, "I assume your seniors will want you to be Engineering Prince. Would you do it if you had the chance?"

Aside from academic stuff, they knew a lot about these activities.

"No."

"How come?"

"Besides my looks, I'm no better than anyone. There are people who are more suitable for this position." They nodded understandingly.

"Last question...what do you expect from the department?"

"After four years as a student here, I hope to stay the same."

"..."

"As someone who keeps growing indefinitely."

I just wished to be a better person in all aspects.

That was all.

The first day of moving into the dormitory was a real headache.

Today was another chaotic day. Due to the large number of engineering students, they were permitted to be the first to move in. We also needed to be accommodated there for a year before rightfully moving out.

That was fucking ridiculous. Why would they control us about our sleeping places?

“Arc, let’s talk.”

My family was there that day: my mother, brother, and sister. But the one most worried about me moving out was my father.

I followed him to the balcony. He glanced at me and propped his elbows onto the railing. Fucking cool. He was probably flexing his coolness to make me jealous, which surprisingly worked.

“You’re living on your own now. Don’t misbehave too much.” My father stressed the words, ‘too much’.

For as long as I could remember, my parents never demanded or forced me to do anything against my will. And as I grew older, they understood that it wasn’t easy to control a teenager. Therefore, my father gave me freedom and at the same time taught me about various situations.

“I know.”

“Don’t smoke...” He turned to me. “In your room.”

“Okay. I know the matter of time and place.”

“Wear a condom every time you have sex. It’d be better to just avoid the one-night stands.”

“What kind of person do you think I am?”

“Just a warning. I know you’ll do it one day.” As expected of my father. “As for alcohol, drink moderately. I don’t want to find out later that your friends carried you back. Not cool. Got it?”

“Yeah.”

“As for relationships.”

“Mom talked about that. She said it’s okay as long as we behave.”

“Don’t get anyone pregnant.” He repeated my mother’s words. I listened and nodded to assure him. “Good, we don’t need a grandchild right now.”

“Anything else?”

“That’s all.”

“Won’t you specify who I’ll be dating? What’s your preferred appearance and personality? Do they have to be smart?”

“Ugh, you’re a grownup. It’s up to you who you’re into. Your choice.”

“Oh!”

“...”

“Hello, mister. Hello, ma’am. Hello, everyone. I’m Copp, Arc Anol Paraminphisan’s roommate.” The voice from the front drew our attention.

That bastard grinned brightly with a black backpack on his shoulder and a large cardboard box in his hands. It was our second encounter after only texting. We agreed to be roommates out of the blue during a first-year activity. I completely forgot to think if we would get along.

“You’re Copp? Nice to meet you. Arc...help your friend get that box in.”

My encounter with Copp made my university life fifty percent more despicable as we joined at the hip. I had no choice but to somehow become his close friend.

Copp was an athletic type. He was good at kicking and dribbling balls. He was good at everything except engineering. Copp was close to a boy from a different school whom he met at cram school. His name was Bloom. Damn, it was hell when we were all together

Bloom's great point was he was very rich, easy-going, and always showed off his wealth to the point we had to calm him down, or he wouldn't have any money left to spend. Besides Copp, Pond, and Bloom, there were a few more friends. Though we weren't that close, we would help each other out all the time. Until...

I was introduced to this peculiar, unknown person.

"You will start drawing lots for your peer mentors in ten minutes. Please sit down."

A peer mentor selection

"Seriously, is it that big of a deal?" someone grumbled behind me, and I agreed. Pond was the only person justifying this.

"It's nice to have peer mentors. They treat you to a meal and buy you things."

"Moms do that, too."

"It's different. Our mothers' money is like ours. But our peer mentors' money is theirs."

"What the heck?"

"Hehe." Hehe, my ass!

"It's time to find out who your peer mentor will be. The first row, please come out."

"Wooooow!" The cheering and drums reverberated. The drawing of the lots continued in this lively atmosphere. Everyone was excited to have their own peer mentors, while the sophomores wondered who their peer mentees would be.

The box of lots was held out to each student. A repetitive sequence. Due to the large number of engineering students, it took two hours to reach my row.

"Next row, please come out."

"Is that him? He's walking to the front row. Arccccc, I'm available!"

“I want to be Arc’s peer mentor. I’ll take good care of you and feed you well.” They shouted from behind. It seemed everyone focused on my gear code despite how unimportant it was. My mother gave me money. I didn’t need anyone to pay for my meals.

“Okay, next. Put your hand in. Deep.”

Any deeper than this and my hand would plunge through the box.

I grabbed one piece of paper and passed it to the staff member. She took it and announced.

“Anol’s gear code is 0614.”

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“What the hell? What’s happening? This is insane!” The sophomores were going feral while the freshmen scratched their heads and glanced around to locate my peer mentor.

“Jet, come get your peer mentee!”

Finally, a tall guy stood amid the thunderous applause. I watched him jog toward me with a marigold garland, unsure how to feel. All I knew was it wasn’t all that bad to have this person as my peer mentor.

“A Campus Prince last year,” said a sophomore next to me.

That explained his handsomeness. Tons of girls were smitten with him, apparently.

“Is this a gear code of good-looking people? The world is unfair.” More opinions were shared. My peer mentor soon stopped in front of me and put the marigold garland on my neck.

“What’s up? I’m Jet.”

“Arc.”

“Yeah. Glad to have you as my peer mentee. You like soccer.”

“A little.”

“Let’s play together sometime.”

We just met and he already invited me to play soccer.

“Don’t go anywhere after classes. Let’s meet up. I bought you a lot of things.” I nodded. Jet took the liberty of flinging his arm around my neck in a friendly way and whispering in my ear.

“I’m not treating you to a meal today. Are you free tonight?”

“Yeah.”

“Good. Let’s drink together. I’ll pay.”

“Booze?”

“Hell, yeah. You’ll like it.”

That was my first time meeting Jet. His friendly behavior led me to open my heart and learn more about him, though at times...he would teach me terrible things.

“Freshmen, line up according to your major.”

We were requested to assemble in the activity hall for the hundredth time since the second-year and third-year students had been constructing ice-breaking activities for us. It was fun at first, but, as days passed, it became so tedious that I wished to run away.

“They’ll make us dance to that banana song again,” Copp complained.

Of course, they would. Yesterday he danced to a fruit song as punishment. Those moves would haunt him until graduation.

“You looked cool.” I comforted him.

“You wouldn’t understand. You’re handsome. See? They adore you.”

“I’ve never asked them to adore me.”

“All right, quiet! We called you here today to inform you about the schedule before and during the semester.”

“No cheering activity!!” Someone shouted, followed by others. “Don’t force us to do that!”

“In this day and age?”

“Damn, they’re bold,” Pond whispered, looking slightly different with his contact lenses on.

“Okay. We’re not talking about the cheering activity. Firstly.” The female MC went quiet momentarily. She walked to the other staff members and discussed something for a while before coming back with the same bright smile.

“We’ll announce future activities later. But today...”

“We can leave?”

“No. As you know, there’s an annual important activity for the freshmen. Do you know what it is?”

“A goodbye senior party?”

“Huuuh? Not yet. You haven’t even started. I’ll just tell you. It is...is...is...the Prince-and-Princess Contest.”

“Whooooooooooa!”

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaa, I’m pretty. Choose me!”

“There are pretty girls in this department? Unbelievable.”

“Quiet! Please listen to me for ten minutes.” It was absolute chaos. The freshmen were uncontrollable. When the MC refused to speak, everyone slowly quietened. “We won campus contests for several years in succession. Let’s do our best this year.”

“...”

“We’ll select contestants from each major first. This time we will vote. You can write down the names on the notes and put them in a box. The sophomores will hand out notes for each row and you will write the names of one boy and one girl from your major. We’ll count them and announce the result within today.”

The crowd buzzed and it became chaotic again. Everyone turned their heads back and forth searching for their options. Meanwhile my friends and I...

“Can we write your name, Arc?” asked Pond.

“No. Write someone else’s. Tell everyone in front of and behind you not to choose me. If I catch anyone, I’ll cut their dicks off with scissors.”

“Cruuuuuuel.”

“Tell them.”

“Seriously, is there anyone here more good looking than you? Just accept their opinions.”

“It doesn’t take only looks to win. Choose anyone you like. Just...don’t write my name.”

“Okay~ If you say so.”

We’re stuck in this inescapable room with bolted doors. As it took nearly an hour to write and submit the notes, many had fallen asleep. Some chatted. I, as a good person, stayed awake. Because I was playing on my phone.

“We got the results. We’ll announce the ten contestants from all majors. Let’s start with mechanical engineering. The male contestant is...Taywin.”

“Yeah!!” The clapping and cheering rang in my ears. The contestants walked to the front upon their names being announced through the microphone. I fidgeted, predicting my face.

“I want out of here,” I mumbled. Everyone else would’ve asked, but the three guys around me said the same thing.

“Why? It’s not going to be you. I told them not to choose you,” said Copp firmly.

“Can we even trust them?”

“Hey, don’t underestimate me. If you’re selected, you can kick my mouth.”

“Okay. Don’t take your words back.”

“The first contestant from civil engineering is...Arc Anol.”

“Yeah! Arcccc! I’m rooting for yoooooou!”

Fuuuuuuuuck! I’d get to kick someone’s mouth.

“You said it wasn’t going to be me.” I glared at my best friend with tons of questions in my mind, which were soon answered by people around me.

“Someone told us to write your name, so we all did. Go for it, man. Win it!”

Noooooo, I said, don’t, not do it!

I had no idea what twisted words were spread, but I couldn't oppose anything right now. The sophomores ushered me to the front without asking. I turned my head to my friends in the row and saw them smiling meekly and uselessly.

Even though the contest wasn't unbearable, it wasn't who I was. Why were the freshmen forced to do things against their will?

I didn't know what these seniors had been through. Did they ever object to it? Or were they all willing to participate in the contest? Regardless, being dressed dramatically and dolled up and faking a smile to gain votes should be carried out by those who were genuinely passionate about it. And I wasn't one of them.

A mix of thoughts flooded my mind. I tried to organize my words in the line before deciding to walk toward a sophomore, presumably one of the judges.

"Is it possible to quit?"

"Nong Arc, no. Don't say that. Go back to your place."

"I feel forced."

"Oh~ I'll feel bad if you create a drama. Can't you do it for the department?"

"No."

"Shush, stop it. I'm going to cry. At least get through this round. We can talk later if you're still not okay." She pushed my shoulders back to my place in the line, then the sophomores and students in older years started to explain the rules.

"In this round, you will show off your talents, one each, so we can select ten of you to be photographed and promoted on the department page. You will have ten minutes to perform. The first person, get ready. Don't be scared or nervous. Just be natural."

I was totally doomed. How were we supposed to be natural while being forced to do this? I waited to be called up onto the stage in despair. A while later, I heard my name.

"Next from civil engineering, Arc Anol~"

"Wooooohoooo!!!"

"You can just win, Arc!"

"How handsome you are! Heyyyy!" The cheering failed to cheer me up, yet I kept walking onto the stage quietly. Was literally silent. When the MC shoved her microphone into my hand, I said nothing and just stood there.

"What are you going to show us?" The MC nudged upon my silence. It worked because I suddenly wanted to reply.

"I have no talents."

"Will you perform anything for your friends?"

"No."

"Because you didn't have much time to prepare, huh? Let's answer some questions. How do you feel about being chosen as one of the contestants from civil engineering?"

"Upset."

"Arcccccc, don't be upset with me," the guys down there howled. "Let's make uuuuuuup."

"How adorable they are. Why are you upset with them?"

"I told them not to choose me. Why did you write my name?"

"The girls chose you. These girls." It became a war between the girls and those motherfuckers, which wouldn't have ended well had the seniors not stepped in.

"All right. Enough of this mess. Nong Arc, do you want to say anything to your friends or the judges?"

"May I speak to the seniors?"

"Yes."

"I'm not going to be an Engineering Prince."

"...!!"

"I'd rather not elaborate on my reason. This position just isn't for me."

"What should you be, then?!" The guys shouted with a laugh.

I took a deep breath, put the microphone to my mouth and spoke in my fucking sonorous voice. “I should be the Superior Prince.”

“Whoa, Arc, you son of a bitch.”

“If there’s a contest for this position, I’ll participate. Thank you.”

“Kyaaaaaaaaa, the Superior Prince.”

I had no clue how those cheeky words popped up in my head, but I knew it was the only way to get me out of this contest. After all, I was born to be...

The Superior Prince.

Me establishing myself mindlessly as the Superior Prince in the activity hall became the talk of the town. Shortly after, engineering students began teasing me to the point that it turned into the quote of the week. They chatted about it and posted it on Facebook. Even captions on Instagram quoted my words.

The seniors weren’t aggravated by my actions. On the other hand, they loved and adored me even more, claiming I had a good sense of humor and was a funny guy. Did they not notice my serious expression?

Subsequently, I avoided all department activities, getting sick and annoyed with them. I also didn’t wish to receive gifts from the seniors who always flocked around me, which made the other students feel dejected and blatantly displayed favoritism. It was ideal not to show up at all.

More importantly, I had friends who understood and shared the same attitude to support me.

Every day, we would escape from all activities for freshmen, including cheering practices. We skipped them so many times that while the others successfully received their gears and workshop shirts...

I just bought them at the student association.

Life like that was nice. I would wake up to eat breakfast at the dormitory cafeteria, attend my classes, come back to work on my assignments, and sometimes go clubbing like people my age would do. However I didn't expect that to happen.

"You got a lot of presents today. What a burden for your friend to carry them back there." Copp tossed the paper bag of gifts and snacks onto my bed. I asked the same question every day.

"Why did you accept them, Copp?"

"I suck at rejection. If you don't want it, you can just print your message and paste it all over the department next time."

"I would've done it if it'd work."

"You got a cake today." A gluttonous ghost had possessed my friend.

"Eat it."

"Wow, you're handsome and kind. There are cream puffs as well. You want some? Lay's?"

"No. I'll text Pond to eat them with you."

"Great."

It wasn't that awful to be a receiver with no pressure to give back since the horrible thing was...

Rrrr...!

My phone rang at ten. I glanced at the screen to find an unknown number. Never picking up calls from strangers, I hung up without a care. Still, the same number called over and over. Assuming it could be urgent, I finally answered.

Who would've thought it would be a girl whose name I didn't even know...?

[Is this Arc's number?]

"Yes."

[This is Gel from the third year. Are you free tomorrow evening?]

“Why?”

[I wondered if you’ll join the activity tomorrow.]

“You had to call me for this? How did you get my number?”

[Pardon?]

“Jet?”

[No.]

“I’m hanging up.”

That was the first one. The next day, an unknown number called me again. I also received a text and notifications from my social media platforms linked to my number to the point I was on the verge of rampaging. My friends were aware of the situation and sometimes joked about it to lighten up the mood.

“Ooooooh, there’s even gay porn. Cool.”

“Just block them.”

“They’ll create a new account.”

Rrrr...!

“Shit, another one. These people are obsessed.” I was unsure how my number had been leaked, but I assumed it was when I filled out the form to participate in the ice-breaking activities. I was fed up with this. My privacy had been demolished.

“Hang up.”

“No, no. I’ll handle it.”

“Copp.”

“Trust me.” Copp picked up the call. “Hello, who is this?” I hated his high-pitched voice so much. I wanted to snap a rubber band at his lips.

“Yes, this is Arc’s number. He’s taking a shower. You can talk to me.”

“...”

“Oh, yes. I’m his girlfriend. Got a problem?”

He threw a bomb at me just like that. How could my girlfriend be manlier than me? You piece of shit.

"We slept, ate, and fucked in several positions. Who are you? Who gave you the right to call someone's boyfriend? You witch!"

"Just hang up," I demanded in a level voice.

"All right. Tell me how you got his number and I won't jump you at the restroom."

"..."

"That's it. Don't ever call him again. I'll tell my boyfriend to change his number."

"..."

"Yeah. Feel free to ride your bike here to fight me. I'm ready to slap the shit out of you. Muah!"

What a disturbing way to end a conversation.

"Change your number. This senior said she got your number from the profile record in the student association. I think many more students have your number but still don't have the nerve to call you. Change it for your own sake." At this point, my roommate was the most untrustworthy one. He just snapped at others and pretended to be my girlfriend in a creepy but smooth way. That was frightening.

"Arc."

"What?"

"Get a girlfriend."

"You think it's easy?"

"It is for you. Maybe...if you have a girlfriend, they will stop hoping and leave you alone."

"It's not the right reason to date someone."

"I don't know. It's just a suggestion. Seriously...don't you think of dating at all?"

"It's not that I don't. I just haven't found the right person."

I didn't expect anything but I believed I'd find them one day...

Bang-on Pochana had become the bar my friends and I frequented.

The bar was divided in two zones: an indoor zone for customers who preferred folk songs and sipping beer and an outdoor zone with a massive projector screen for soccer fans.

Tonight was like the other nights. The only difference was students from the other departments were there as well.

"Arc," said Warm, a political science student and the current Campus Prince.

He would've lost had I participated in the contest. Who was I? Come on, I was the Superior Prince.

"What?"

"Are you dating anyone?" he asked out of the blue, surprising me.

We played soccer countless times and always drank together, but he'd never asked that question.

"No. Why?"

"My friend has a thing for you."

"Not interested. If I like someone, I'll hit on them myself."

"Why would you crush her hopes so quickly? I'll give you her number. If you're interested, just set a date. You can see if you like her later." Warm handed a note with a ten-digit number to me.

"Why does she like me? Because of my face?"

"I don't know. Ask her." Ugh! He was smart at stupid stuff.

"Did this benefit you in some way, given you passed on the message for her? You never talked about things like this."

"No. She is my high school friend. Super cute. Not as cute as your ex, though."

"What does my ex have to do with this? No need to mention her." I never compared people since everyone had their own strengths. It depended on our feelings and compatibility.

Even if my ex in high school had entered showbiz and thrived on her path, it didn't mean my next lover must be better.

"I don't know. You might think she's not a good match," Warm pointed out.

"I'll decide on that."

"So you're going to meet her? I can set a date for you. Where? A café?"

"Cut it out."

"Tomorrow at the soccer field?"

"The soccer field? You think it's funny to have a date there?"

"Show her who you are, Arc. My friend doesn't care about shit like that."

I shook my head at my friend's remark. And I fucking hated that I eventually met the girl.

Warm, the matchmaker, quit meddling in our relationship, and I wasn't too serious about it. Oddly enough... I didn't feel anything at first, but after we talked and shared multiple stories, my feelings for her somehow developed.

Our relationship progressed quickly before we finally agreed to date.

As I had said, the right person didn't have to force it.

But I had no idea if we would always be together.

"Arc." I was drinking with my friends again, with Warm and the other guys joining us like usual. And, of course, he knew everything. My relationship with her ended in less than one year.

"What?"

"Why did you break up with her? You could've slowly worked things out."

"I tried, but it didn't really work."

"You said you got along well."

"But that wasn't who she is." I didn't know how much I'd drunk, but my heart was stuffed with those inexplicable feelings that could only be eased by alcohol.

"It was almost a year."

“Right. It was almost a year, yet I didn’t know who she was. I just discovered the side of her that didn’t fit.”

I was aware that people tended not to be themselves during first encounters. You would only show your good side, act nice, and care about the other person. But as time went on, everything changed. You couldn’t hide who you were for long, and it would eventually slip out.

She never cheated or saw anyone behind my back. She was perfect, yet, we weren’t compatible.

“It’s not like I didn’t try.”

“ ... ”

“I didn’t want to fail.” That was the best I could do.

“Nobody blames you for this. Seriously, are you still in love with her?”

“I was,” I answered in an instant.

“What do you mean? You’re not anymore?”

“I no longer feel anything. I’m not a fan of who she actually is, and she can’t accept some parts of me.” The love was lost. We only attempted to maintain the relationship out of the lingering attachment to what we’d built together.

“I understand.”

“We’re better off broken up. At least she’ll get to start again with someone new.”

“What about you?”

“I don’t want to love anyone.”

I was satisfied with my secluded life and spending some time hanging out with my friends. I didn’t wish to know new people, just to be attacked and regret it when it didn’t work out.

“Why are you so sad?” Relieve it with alcohol.”

“Yeah.”

CLINK!!

By the time the bar was closed, I was wasted. My friends had no choice but to awkwardly carry me back to the dormitory. Thankfully, my father never found out since I'd promised to take good care of myself. Look at me now. The image of the Superior Prince at Bang-on Pochana would scar me for a night.

After the breakup, I never planned to date anyone again. I loved my life typically and filled with the emptiness in my heart with one-night stands with girls I stumbled across at the bar.

My father should be proud. I'd used so many condoms that I might as well be the presenter of the product.

The first one-night stand was followed by the second and the third. Every three or four days to freshen up. It was pleasant to blow off some steam that way because we would become strangers the next day. No love. No attachment. No connection. A win-win situation. Eventually, my attempt was hindered.

"Arc, a word."

We'd all moved out of the dormitory. Fortunately, my parents bought me an apartment, so I had my own spacious private space.

On a couch in the living room, Copp narrowed his eyes as if inspecting my body.

"Seriously, have you slept with a lot of girls lately?"

"No."

"You have a bite mark on your neck."

"Yeah, I told her not to, but she still did it."

"How many?"

"Why?"

"Just answer."

"Four."

"Good thing it's just the beginning. You haven't become Arc with a Hundred Girls, a topic of gossip in our department. P'Jet saw you last night and gave me a call. I knew what

happened. But did you have to do this after the breakup?" That was a first. The first time Copp spoke in such a stern voice.

"I didn't do it because of the breakup I just got bored." It ended well for both parties with no strings attached. Why would he ever force that reason into my life right now? It didn't make sense.

"Your way to kill the boredom is sure exciting, but please. I don't want to meddle, but this is not you."

"How am I supposed to be?"

"You have the answer."

"Elaborate so I can act right." I became sarcastic, though I had no clue why or if the world would care,

"The same, old friend of mine."

"..."

I know you said you didn't want to lose or date anyone, but trust me. You'll find someone compatible with you. Someone you will love as who they are without forcing yourself to get along with them."

"You think I will?"

The world is huge. There are billions of people out there. Someone must be the right one. Will you please behave?"

"..."

"If you can't do it for yourself, at least do it for your future lover. Being born to be a good thing in someone's life is something to be proud of."

"..."

"And I believe that person will be a good thing in your life as well."

I didn't know how Copp came up with such cool words, yet it bizarrely worked. Those words slowly altered my thoughts.

A single life wasn't bad. But then that day came...

On the day I would find someone compatible, I would never make them regret being in love with me.

Goodbye senior party.

The graduation party to send the graduates spreading their wings and flying into the world is bustling with activities. The engineering party is themed in the Marvel Universe, so various superheroes pack the area.

I can't believe time flies this fast. In the blink of an eye, I'm a fourth-year student getting ready for my internship.

I look back to my first year. There were good and bad times, including the phase when I was so unruly that my friends had to stop me. I got through everything.

"Why are you smiling?" I shake those memories off my head and shift my attention to the newcomer, who is stifling a smile.

"I'm not smiling. You're talking nonsense."

"It's on your face. Go lie to a dog in the alley." I knocked the smaller guy's head playfully.

Arm cosplays as Loki today, while I'm forced to cosplay as Thor, the god of thunder, for couple photos. Check out my wig. Of all looks, he made me cosplay as Thor with loong, silky hair. Damn it.

"Okay, I admit it. Today...you look different."

"You like it?"

"No." I fling my arm around his neck immediately. He always messes with me, provoking me to take action.

FWIP!

"Woo, woo!"

The lights are turned off. All attention is drawn to the large projector screen over the stage. Although all engineering students are here, the stars are the fourth-year students.

“Hey, who is that? Wooooooo!” After a text slides up, a photo of the president of the generation appears. It’s a photo of my first year.

“You had a mullet back then? Silly. Haha.”

The teasing and hollering echo across the room. The second and third photo glides up, taking us down memory lane to the beginning.

I didn’t expect them to display old photos. And it’s absolutely impactful to us. Tuned in, Arm laughs and pouts at each photo, saying he can barely recognize anyone.

“Kyaaaaaaaaa, the Superior Prince.”

“Arc and the legendary contest. Haha.”

My photo pops up on the screen, and I look fucking horrible in it. It shows me being dragged out to the front with seniors clutching my arms to be the contestant from civil engineering. Fuck, I hate it.

“You were handsome.” Arm gazes up with sparkling eyes.

“What about now?”

“Ugly as fuck.”

“You’ll be punished once we’re home.”

“So scared. Hey! That’s Copp. Ugh, he danced to the banana song so weirdly.” My photo is replaced by Copp’s embarrassing footage, which makes the man who danced those bizarre moves yell.

Everyone laughs, reminiscing about the good old days.

“Arc agaaaaaaaaaain. The image of the handsome civil engineering boy is shattered.”

“You used to be like that? Insaaaaaane.”

I facepalm at the sudden attack. It’s a photo of me completely wasted. I was heartbroken, if I remember correctly. I broke up with my ex and drank the pain away, then I fooled around, having multiple one-night stands.

“Yeah. I fucking hate myself at that time.”

"How did you end up like that?" Arm's voice softens, not meeting my eyes.

"I was heartbroken. Just broke up with my ex."

"The second one?"

"Yeah."

"That's sad."

"I was fucked up." The old feelings are being replayed. I even lose interest in the photos on the projector screen. "I got drunk, slept around, and told myself to never fall in love again."

"How did you get through it?"

"It was Copp, I think He came to my place and said something I vaguely remember. Something like I would find the right person one day, so I should get back on track."

"..."

"If I can't do that for myself, I should do it for my future lover."

"Copp is fucking cool." Arm looks at me and beams. "And you did a good job getting through it."

"I wish I could meet my past self to thank him for changing himself. It's worth it today because I've found that person."

"Who? Is it me?" Arm jokes.

"No."

"Ugh, are you kidding?"

"Aren't you Loki today?"

"Loki can deliver a message."

"Then deliver this to someone."

"Go ahead."

"I love you."

"..."

"Thank you for being born, Arm."

END

Special 2

Love Each Other, the Angel Gear Code

"The Angel Gear code will have a new member next Monday. I'm excited."

"What's to be excited about?"

"You have no idea. It's nice to have a peer mentee because I want to see everyone together. P'Jet is the Campus Prince, P'Yeepoon is the Engineering Princess. You're the Superior Prince, I..." My voice trails off, my head blank.

Unfortunately, I fell off the stage and failed to become the Engineering Prince and win the popular vote.

"What are you?"

"A...good person."

"That's a position?" asks Arc, chewing a cookie on the couch. My mother bought me that box of cookies, but Arc nearly finished it without shame."

"Yeah. Being a good person is a victory."

"There's a position for you. A significant one."

"What?"

"The Superior Prince's boyfriend."

"Awwwww, that goes without saying." I would have blushed before, but I'm immune to this now, not feeling anything. Plus, Arc always flatters me just to crush me later, leaving me hanging.

"So full of yourself."

"That's why I'm dating you. Hey...let's go shopping on Thursday evening."

"To buy gifts for your peer mentee?" asks Arc, biting the cookie. I nod. "I need to see if the guys will work on the group assignment. If not, I'll go with you."

“Okay, deal. What should I buy?”

“Sit down and think. You’re hurting my head, pacing back and forth.”

“My head is clearer this way, and it’s fun to figure out what to buy as a welcoming gift to my peer mentee.” Arc wouldn’t understand. He’s super cold. Even on an important day of the brooch ceremony, the Superior Prince didn’t even show up for Yeepoon.

“Think sitting down. Don’t stand there.”

“Just say you want to hold me.”

“As if.”

“You’re talking like an old man,” I snarl, yet I walk toward the tall guy, settle on the couch and lean my head on his shoulder.

Somehow, I’ve become more clingy since I started living with Arc. I feel comfortable around him. Every time my parents ask me to go home, I am not able to sleep without him to cuddle. Damn, that’s sad.

“All right, what do you have in mind? If I’m free on Wednesday, I’ll get it.”

“I think we should get them stationery. MUJI stationery is cute.”

“Yeah.” Arc nods in agreement.

“And kitchenware.”

“They don’t need that in the dormitory. Freshmen usually eat at the cafeteria or outside. Just a set of kitchen utensils will do.”

“Oh, and a laundry basket.”

“Won’t their family buy them that?”

“They can have multiple options. Oh, wait, I almost forgot. A small table for snacks on the bed.” Arc listens quietly, munching on the cookie. It looks like he’s listening and also not. Damn... “Give me some.”

“Here.” Arc holds out the box.

“Feed me.”

“Quit acting cute. Feed yourself.”

“How heartless you are. Are we really dating? Why are you so mean to me?”

“Cry baby. I don’t care.”

Ugggggh, the honeymoon phase is over. Now he even complains about how strong my perfume is. So annoying. I’ll feed myself, then. I chew and fight the urge to spit at him.

“Chew slowly, you’ll choke.”

“I won’t.”

“Wait here. I’ll get you something to drink. What do you want?”

“Cola.”

“We don’t have it.”

“Orange juice, then.”

“There’s only grape juice.”

“Why did you ask me? Unbelievable.” Our stuff is mixed in the fridge half-and-half. If our parents don’t send us groceries on weekends, we will drive out to buy food as our late-night snacks. “Where are all my colas?”

“It’s not healthy. I gave it all to my friends at the department.”

“You’re cruel.” Arc pours grape juice into a glass and passes it to me.

“This is healthier.”

“How is artificial juice healthier?”

“You keep talking back. I guess you don’t want to cuddle me tonight. Should I go home?”

“No.” I lose to this trick every time.

Our relationship is simple and nothing dramatic, and I like it. I love the way we have each other like this without faking anything. He’s thoughtful of me and vice versa. Many say they envy us, and maybe that’s understandable.

How lucky I am to be in a relationship with Arc...

“Let’s have hotpot for dinner. I’ll invite Yo and the guys,” Sand suggests. I’m not free today, though.

“You guys go. I have to go to the mall and buy my peer mentee’s gifts with P’Arc.”

“You still have several days. What’s the hurry?” asks Pipo in puzzlement.

“Arc has to work on a group assignment with his friends, usually on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. I don’t want to disturb him.” Also, the Superior Prince refused to let me go alone, worried that no one would help me carry the bags, hence the agreement.

“Oh, we can have hotpot tomorrow instead.”

“You can go today and eat with me again tomorrow.”

“I’m short on money right now, so I can’t have hotpot often. I’ll be broke. Let’s settle it this way. Today we’re on our own way.”

“Okay. See you.”

We split up after classes. I go down the stairs and wait for Arc at a table in the electrical engineering building. I take out my phone and call the tall guy, but he doesn’t pick up. I wait patiently. A while later, I buy a beverage and finish it with only ice left. With no sign of him contacting me so I call him again.

Arc picks up this time. Let me think of a response to guilt trip him.

“Took you long enough. I...” Before I finish, a voice cuts in. A female voice.

Is Arc cheating on me?!!

[Is this Arc, Arc’s boyfriend? I’m his friend. Arc isn’t here.]

“Oh, where is he?”

[He went out with his friends and left his backpack and phone here.]

“Oh, when will he come back?”

[No idea. I’ll tell him to call you once he’s back.]

“Thank you so much.”

I've been waiting since five, right after class. It's been half an hour since then, yet Arc is nowhere to be seen. He should've texted me if something urgent came up. Why did he just disappear? How could he let a good guy like me wait miserably with the risk of getting bitten by mosquitoes?

I continue waiting. Because Arc has never stood me up, I assume he's wrapping up his assignment to catch up with me. But it's already six and he's not showing up. Hey! There are mosquitoes!

Rrrr...!

I grab my phone the moment it vibrates, but it's not his number. This one is unknown.

"Hello?" I say, and a familiar voice replies. I know immediately who it is.

[Arm.]

"Where are you, P'Arc? Whose number is this?"

[A friend's. I left my phone at the building? Where are you?]

"At my building."

[Can you leave first? I'm busy today.]

Like getting splashed in the face with a bucket of ice, I feel cold and hurt.

"I didn't bring my car."

[Can you take the train? Something urgent came up. Can we shop together later?]

"You should've told me earlier." How could he make me wait for an hour?

You could've called me with your friend's phone, but you didn't.

I don't want to be petty. I'm usually okay with everything. But he can't make me wait just to cancel it later. This hurts. I feel like smashing my head against the wall.

[I thought I'd make it, but it wouldn't end soon. That's why I called.]

"I understand." No, I don't. I'm upset.

[Arm, can you leave alone?]

"Of course."

[I'm sorry.]

"Hey, no worries. Go take care of your work. It's important."

The call was short, and Arc sounded agitated. I assume he must be busy. It's time for me to go back to the apartment.

I take a train home, feeling strangely hollow. It's lonely without my boyfriend. I'm not angry at all, but... I'm upset and disappointed that we're not spending time together as I hoped.

It's thursday. Tomorrow I'll be having hotpot with the guys, and Arc is busy this weekend. Oh, I just realize the peer mentor selection is on Monday, which means I barely have time to prepare gifts for my peer mentee.

This won't do! Since I'm free today and staying at the apartment will only drive me crazy, I decide to grab my car key and head to the mall to deal with this myself.

I have a long list of things, mostly odds and ends. There are several types of stationery, like a variety of brands of pens, erasers, and highlighters.

"Lecture notebooks, notes, blah, blah, blah..."

What a headaaaaaaache.

Despite my complaint, I actually enjoy it. Before I know it, it's nine. I haven't even had dinner. I guess I'll get some takeouts to eat with Arc. Speak of the devil, he's calling me.

Rrrr...!

Mr. Anol and his perfect timing.

"What's up?"

[Where are you? Why are you not at the apartment? Why didn't you tell me where you were going? I'm worried.] How am I supposed to answer all those bombarding questions?

Relax.

"P'Arc, I'm at the mall. Shopping."

[Why didn't you wait to go together?]

"You were busy, so I came alone. No worries. I'm going home."

[Don't. I'll be there. Which mall? It won't take long.]

"You don't have to come. I'm leaving."

[Send me the location. I'm on my way.] Sigh~ Can I argue with him? No.

I hang up and share the location with him before transferring everything into the backseat of my car. I return inside the mall to wait for the Superior Prince, who soon arrives and strides to me at a café with a scowl.

"Why did you come here alone?" asks Arc.

"I'll be busy on other days, so it should be fine to shop today."

"Are you getting back at me?"

"Nonsense. I'm not getting back at you. I have plans tomorrow and you'll be working on your assignment this weekend. I'm doing this for you. You have a problem with me after canceling our date? How mean." I gush, expecting his counterattack that doesn't come.

"Where did you park?"

"4B."

"Let's go to your car and leave."

"Wait. You go get yours."

"I didn't drive here. I took a taxi. I'm going home with you."

"That's not making me feel better at all."

Arc holds my hand and leads me out without a word, leaving me nagging like a geezer all the way there. Once we're seated, the war of nerves begins.

I wasn't angry before. But his peeved attitude is irrational. Who's in the wrong here?

The car accelerates off the parking lot. I gaze out the window before the silence is drowned by the music.

"I don't like this song." I change it. A few seconds later, Arc switches it back.

"Didn't you see I was listening to it?"

"This is my car!" I press the button again.

"You wanna go?"

"Go where? We're going home."

"You know why I'm mad, right?"

"You know that I can be mad, too, right? You stood me up."

Nobody says anything more until we're at the apartment. We're fighting over silly stuff for real this time. So what? If he wants this war of nerves, I'll play along.

"P'Arc, don't cuddle me tonight."

"You think I want to?"

"Don't eat my snacks in the fridge. And don't touch another box of cookies my mother bought for me."

"Don't eat my instant noodles on the shelf, then."

"I won't! And don't use my shower cream. The peach-scented one."

"I've never used it."

"The laundry basket as well. Don't put your dirty clothes into my basket. If I find one, I'll throw it away. You can look for it yourself."

"Don't mix yours with mine, then."

"Here. Put what I gave you into this box." I fetch a white medium-sized cardboard box from a corner and hold it out to the tall guy. He removes the bracelet and pulls his wallet out before placing it into the box.

"You want the underwear, too?"

"Take it off if you can."

Holy shit, he's doing it! My eyes pop out in shock, yet I keep my composure and watch the tall guy take off his jeans and roll down the underwear into a pretzel. I recall offering to pay for it when we shopped together. Jeez... I shouldn't have.

"Happy?"

"Yes, I am!!" We're over, temporarily splitting up.

Arc enters the bathroom as I stand in the same place with my drumming heart.

I wonder why I'm still not used to the sight of his penis. The thought of it transforming into a weapon to attack me sends me a twinge of pain.

"What am I thinking?!" I shake off that thought. My stomach is empty because I have neither had dinner nor bought a takeout. I saunter into the small kitchen where everything belongs to Arc. It's impossible to fill my stomach with my snacks, and no delivery food is available this late at night.

It would be embarrassing to steal a cup of his instant noodles after all the fuss I made.

The eggs in the fridge are also Arc's. I'm doomed.

"What are you doing?" Shit! I thought he was showering. Arc looks at me with his arms crossed and a towel hanging around his waist.

"What? Nothing. I'm getting grape juice."

"That's mine."

Ouch!!

I don't even have my own juice. What do I have in the fridge? Be for reeeeeal.

"I'll eat cookies and a cola. Got a problem?"

"No cola," Arc scolds.

I quickly snap back, "Why not? I bought it!"

"No carbonated drinks when your stomach is empty. It'll hurt."

"..." How does he know?

But well, cookies will do for now.

I enjoy the cookies on the couch and choose a program to watch. I glance at the tall guy in the kitchen at times, wondering what he's doing. When I smell the pork-flavored instant noodles and hear the sound of eggs cracking, my stomach growls.

So mean. How can he cook in front of a hungry person?

"Arm, come here."

“What? Are you just going to eat in front of me? It won’t work.”

“Just come here.” I don’t know why I obey him. Before I know it, I walk there in a daze.

Wooow, it smells wonderful. A large bowl of instant noodles is laid there on the table.

Two eggs, minced pork and greens. You’d be full until the next life after finishing this, but it’s not mine.

“Give me twenty baht.” Arc extends his hand.

“W...Why?”

“I’m full and no one else will eat it. I’m selling it to you. If you pay...the instant noodles with eggs will be yours.”

“...”

“Or should I put it on your tab?”

“O...Okay.”

“Will you pay in cash, or do I put it on your tab?”

“Put it on my tab.”

“Yeah.” Despite the deadpan expression, his charming face dazzles. He looks even more handsome when saying that.

I sit in my regular chair and slurp on the hot noodles with chopsticks, my heart somewhat throbbing. It feels heavy like I’m about to cry.

“P’Arc.”

“What?” He’s watching the TV on the couch, listening to me despite his indifferent attitude.

“This is delicious.”

“Yeah.”

“Thank you.”

“I sold it. No need to thank me. Eat a lot if you like it. If it’s not enough, I’ll put more on your tab and make more for you.”

I realize how lucky I am.

During our fights, be it big or small, serious or trivial, he cares about me all the same.

After the meal comes another problem at bedtime.

I shouldn't have said he couldn't cuddle me, given I'll be the one unable to stand it. I'm used to the way we always have each other. Now that we're fighting, I have no choice but to endure it.

"Turn off the lights," Arc whispers, facing the window, not even a glance back at me.

"Okay."

Darkness falls upon us, with city lights cascading inside, helping me walk to the bed without hitting anything.

I slide under the blanket and rest my head on the pillow while longingly fumbling for my old bolster that I always kick off the bed. I can't find it tonight.

"Do you see my bolster anywhere?"

"No," replies the guy with his back toward me.

"It must've fallen. Can I turn on the lights?"

"It'll hurt my eyes."

"Just a second. I can't sleep without it."

The tall guy goes silent for a few moments before heaving a sigh. He turns around, props his heavy arm on me and tucks me into his embrace.

"Go to sleep," he whispers in my ear, his voice soft and low.

"I...I said, no cuddle. Don't you remember?"

"I'm cuddling the blanket, not you." Technically, he's right. My body is enveloped in the blanket.

"Then...it's fine. You're not wrong." I say gently, my heart feeling warm.

I'll be able to sleep like usual.

"Good night, naughty brat."

"We're fighting, I'm not saying good night."

"Whatever."

Even so, I'll dream about you.

Because you're the best dream of mine...

It's the peer mentor selection day.

The atmosphere in the activity hall is lively with drums and dancing staff members. The freshmen gradually fill the room in arranged rows. I stand in a corner with the Angel Gear Code. Even Jet, who has graduated, is present to welcome our new member in delight.

"Arm, I prepared this marigold garland and sash. I did my best in making them."

"Thanks a lot, P'Yeepoon."

"You're welcome. I knew you would forget since you were occupied with the gifts."

Remind your peer mentee next year. It's our tradition to make a marigold garland and a sash."

"I will. Well...do you think it will be a boy or a girl?"

"A boy, I think."

"Why?"

"There are more boys than girls in engineering."

"Right."

"What about your fight with P'Arc? Still not making up?" Shit I wonder if Yeepoon has heard his side of the story to suddenly ask this question.

"P'Arc hasn't apologized to me, and I did nothing wrong. That's why I'm upset," I say, hoping the guy close by hears me. He remains calm.

"Who would fight about going shopping? Relax."

"It can escalate."

"You guys are fucking ridiculous, making a big deal out of small stuff," Jet blurts out, destroying the gloomy mood I've set, leaving only something that feels like stupidity.

"Let me tell you what happened. Arc stood me up!"

"I didn't. I called you to cancel it," Arc corrects, being mentioned. I don't back off.

"Why didn't you call me earlier? How could you make me wait for an hour? You're mean."

"I didn't call at first because I thought I would make it and we would meet soon, but it took longer than expected. When I realized I wouldn't make it, I called you right away. But you were upset and went to the mall alone."

"I had free time. Couldn't I go when I was free?"

"We agreed to go together."

"Don't overthink it."

"You, too."

"Calm down, you two. Ugggh, my head hurts. What a stupid fight. Make up already. Don't fight in front of freshmen. It's embarrassing."

"You must apologize to me first."

"..."

I grant him a chance, yet he refuses to speak. Okay...whatever.

"It's finally the highlight of the event, like every year. You probably know you'll find out who your peer mentor is today. Stay alert, freshmen and sophomores. The first row, please come up."

This is how being a sophomore feels like, huh?

In our first year, you know when your time will come and get excited to meet your peer mentor. Now that I'm a sophomore, I get excited with every lot being drawn. Much more exhausting.

"Pichit, your gear code is 0136."

"Yeah!!"

There goes the first student. The second, third, and more students walk to the front. The drums and clapping start and end and repeat.

Another fun part of this activity is how each gear code owns its signatures. For example, the one that likes frogs has a frog sash and a crown for their peer mentee to wear and show off as they walk back into their row.

“Still not the Angel Gear Code’s turn?” Yeepoon grumbles an hour later.

“Next row, please come up.”

Wow~~

Many people shift their attention to a student in a row. He’s tall, his skin neither fair nor tan. His face and hair make him stand out among the others. This boy is handsome to the point that heads turn.

“He’s emotionless like Arc in his first year,” Jet says, laughing.

There are ten students per row. That boy is the fifth one.

“He’s going to be eye candy for his gear code for a whole year,” Yeepoon points out.

We’ve been waiting in anticipation since the first student in the row. The second and third students have gone, and there’s still no luck.

“All right, the fifth one,” announced the MC.

Everyone fixes their eyes on the stage and the long fingers reaching into the box and withdrawing with a piece of white paper.

“Yotha’s gear code is 0775.”

A round of applause. I clap along.

“Arm, isn’t that your code?”

“Huh?!!”

“0775, idiot. Go welcome him,” Arc says, shoving the marigold garland and sash in my hands. Everyone in the room whoops and hollers in excitement.

“Amazingggggg.”

“The Angel Gear Code!”

“Kyaaaaaa! Nong Arm, go for it! Go, the Angel Gear Code.”

My ears ringing, I pace forward until I halt in front of my peer mentee. What a startling sight up close. Wow... he's really tall. I'm at his nose level.

"Hey, I'm Arm, majoring in electrical engineering." I drape the sash around him and put the marigold garland that I dread on his neck.

"I'm Yotha, civil engineering."

"Really? It's like you were born for it." *(Yotha means civil)

"Yeah."

"I'm happy to have you as my peer mentee. See you after this. I'll wait in that corner with your other peer mentors."

"Okay."

"You're not a talkative guy, huh?"

"You're very talkative." Fuck! A sudden attack. As expected of my peer mentee. We're all a pain in the ass.

Yotha returns to his spot, and the peer mentor selection resumes.

When it's over, each gear code brings their new members to restaurants for a meal as a tradition to share good times. After our meal, Jet and Yeepoon don't let Yotha go. Tonight...it's karaoke time.

Think about it. Yotha is a quiet guy.

Arc and I are upset with each other and keep a distance from each other. Only two people sing tonight, and they're the Prince-Princess couple.

"Arm, sing."

"I suck at this."

"Nong Yotha, come on. You must have a beautiful voice," the Engineering Princess pesters. Failing, she turns to Arc. "P'Arc, let's sing."

"I don't like to do this. You know it."

"Today is not fun at all. We're supposed to love each other."

"It'll be fun when those two make up. So? When will you make up?" asks the oldest guy.

I meet Arc's eyes briefly before grabbing the microphone to my mouth.

"I don't know why things turned out this way, but I know you care about me."

"..."

"If I've ever done anything that caused discomfort, I'm sorry."

It's not like I haven't been feeling uncomfortable. I'd rather be nice and loved by him if possible. I wanted to hug, kiss, cuddle and eat with him every day. Even though it's been only three days with this stupid fight, I feel like dying. Let's not prolong it.

"That's you singing?" Arc says into the microphone.

"You're not singing."

"I can't sing. If you want me to make a sound, I'll do it in bed with you alone."

"Uggggh, you son of a bitch. The freshman is here. Arc! Arm!"

"I was in the wrong that day."

It gets emotional. Should I brace myself to cry...?

"I was wrong for thinking I would make it in time and ending up not making it. I made you wait for a long time and go to the mall alone despite our promise. I'm sorry." Daaaaamn, he's apologizing to me. This is sad.

"You two made up. I'm so happy. The Angel Gear Code should love each other, right, Nong Yotha?" asks Yeepoon.

But Yotha has fallen asleep. He must adore us so fucking much.

We all leave at ten. Arc and I volunteer to drive Yotha to the dormitory, then head back to the apartment.

On the way, Arc starts. "We made up, didn't we? Why are you so quiet?"

"You're quiet too."

"You always talk and talk. I could be quiet and you would go on and on."

"It still feels weird after being upset for days."

"I guess so. You were quiet and refused to sing."

"You also didn't sing."

"They don't have a song I like, and my voice sucks."

"You're the best." I mean it. His looks, words, and how much he cares.

"There's actually one song."

"..."

"I won't sing it, but I'll play it for you."

"Okay."

Arc taps on his phone, connecting to the stereo. Soon it plays the subtle sound of drums and other instruments. I think I heard this song...but never paid attention to the lyrics.

'What time are you coming out?'

We started losing light

I'll never make it right if you don't want me around

I'm so excited for the night

All we need's my bike and your enormous house

You said some day we might

When I'm closer to your height

'Til then, we'll knock around and see

If you're all I need'

**Falling for you - The 1975*

Listening, I can comprehend only some parts of the lyrics, but I understand the overall message.

"Can you understand it?"

"A little. I like the melody and Matty, the lead singer."

"That's what you focus on?"

"Oh, what am I supposed to focus on?"

Arc says nothing, letting me absorb the music. The road and city lights are laid out before us. The night is long.

'Don't you see me?'

"Don't you see me?" Arc says in his raspy voice after that line. **Arc translates it to Thai*

"Hmm?" Why did you say that out of the blue?

I turn to Arc, then realize what he's trying to convey.

'I think I'm falling...I'm falling for you.'

"I think I'm falling...I'm falling for you."

'And you don't need me?'

"And you don't need me?"

'I think I'm falling, falling for you.'

"I think I'm falling, falling for you."

'On this night, and this light.'

"On this night, and this light."

'I think I'm falling for you.'

"I think I'm falling head over heels for you."

Tonight, I think we're both falling in love...

END

Special 3

I didn't do anything

"This semester is harsh. The schedule is so packed that I don't have time for claw machines," Pipo grumbles for the millionth time.

Shortly after the semester starts, the engineering second-year students are already occupied with class after class after class. I don't have time for anything else. The third subject today is mandatory: information science.

On the bright side, I get to meet new friends from other departments. Honestly, I'm sick of my friends, especially Pipo and Sand. They're always annoyingly giggling and tittering

CLICK!!

I turn the doorknob and enter the room full of students. The professor has already arrived!

What the hell? We're not late. Why is everyone staring at me and my friends like that?

"It's my bad for starting the class fifteen minutes earlier. Some of you might not have read the message by email or Facebook group. By the way, it's my fault." That jolts me. Is the professor really feeling guilty? Is she reprimanding us? Oh, no.

Why didn't someone forward the message from the group chat to me and the guys? But when Pipo turns his phone to me, displaying heaps of messages from our friends about the time adjustment, I know we're doomed.

"Get seated at the front. The back seats are all occupied," says the professor, sounding slightly bitter, but her eyes are furious.

"Yes, yes."

I sweep my gaze over the front area. There are empty seats here and there, not next to one another. I volunteer to sit alone and gesture to Pipo and Sand to sit together. The professor will glare at us if we take any longer than this.

I tense up in discomfort.

I'm surrounded by students from other departments. I don't know which department they're from, but, according to the register website, they're all second-year students.

"You from engineering?" I turn toward a voice beside me.

“Yeah.” He probably asked because of my uniform. “You?” Am I too casual? I should’ve asked nicely, ‘What about you?’ But it wouldn’t sound like me. I’m not used to being like that with guys.

“Oh, same.”

“Really? I’ve never seen you before. Did you retake a year or what?”

“How could you believe such an obvious lie?” Oh...

“What’s your department?” Instead of answering, he slides a sheet of paper with his department written on it.

“Economics. Cool,” I say, observing him from head to toe. The guy is immaculate, and his limbs are enviably long. Arc has caused me an inferiority complex about my height, now I’ve made a new towering friend. It widens the black hole in my heart.

“How is it cool?”

“Economics students look wealthy. Economics and BA students.”

“We are wealthy.”

“Ermmmmm, flexing much?”

“Can I be your friend?”

“Sure. I’m not a reserved person. I can be friends with anyone.” I am not the type to build walls up high like the Superior Prince. That guy would check people over before opening his heart to them. That’s why he doesn’t have that many friends and is obsessed with messing with me.

“I’ll introduce you to my friends after class.”

“Okay. But you haven’t even introduced yourself.”

“Oh, right. I forgot. I’m Nile.”

“I’m Arm.”

“Nice to meet you.”

And the difficult subject is no longer boring. Sand and Pipo are delighted when I introduce Nile and his friends to them.

“Oh, let’s go to a café after class. There’s a good place,” Nile suggests, and everyone agrees. Once the class is dismissed, we swiftly pack up.

“Shall we go?”

Pipo grins annoyingly. His life has been exhilarating lately. Despite having stopped talking to the girl he was talking to, he doesn’t care. He hangs out with his friends and plays claw machines without a care in the world. Pipo was hurt when he found out she was talking to someone else, but only for a few days. He claimed the sadness was short-lived because he had us.

How touching is that?

“Yeah. Let’s go.”

Rrrr...!

Who would’ve thought someone would call me on our way from the building to the parking lot? I can’t ignore this call, or he’ll chase me away to sleep alone. What a petty guy.

“Helloooooooo,” I draw my voice, walking alongside my friends.

[Is your class over?]

“Yeah. The class in the afternoon got canceled. We’re going to a café.”

[Mm, I have another class this evening. Can your friends give you a ride?]

“Of course. No worries.”

[Have you eaten?]

“I’ll eat at the café. My friend said the dishes and burgers are amazing. Jealous?” I hear a sigh on the other end.

Arc replies in a dark voice. [You’ll be punished when you’re back.]

“So scared.”

[Take care of yourself.] Arc is always like this. He's concerned about me whenever we're not together.

"You don't forget to eat. Even though the food at the engineering cafeteria isn't as good as the food at the café, hold back your tears. Bye." Arc hangs up. All eyes are on me. I hate the way Pipo and Sand purse their lips. How annoying! Have they never seen people having a conversation?

"What are you looking at?" I ask challengingly.

"Nothing."

"P'Arc has class today. You guys give me a ride home."

"What a burdeeen." Look at them taunting me so much that I wonder whose side they're on. They're still idolizing Arc, their idol despite how much time has passed.

"I'll give you a ride." Nile offers during my fight with my best friends.

"Huh?"

"I'm free today. I can give you a ride."

"You don't have to."

"It's all right. We're friends." With that, I have no choice but to accept his kindness.

The guys and I hang out at the café until evening. We're playing mobile games, taking photos, briefly discussing homework, and so on. Once we're about to leave, the nice Nile volunteers to give me a ride.

"Wooooow, you're really rich," I tease upon seeing his car.

I didn't come to the café with him and entered it as soon as I'd arrived. I've just realized how wealthy his family is.

"You're exaggerating."

"An audi."

"It's my brother's."

"So cool. Please allow me to sit shotgun for a day." Nile laughs.

"No problem."

The traffic congestion takes us an hour to reach the condominium. As usual, I call Arc before going up for reassurance. Today, to my surprise, he tells me to wait down here as he also just arrived.

"Thank you for the ride. Today was fun." Smiling, Nile reaches for my head. I dodge his hand in an instant, not realizing the reaction is instinctive.

Only a few people can pat my head, like my close friends or the older guy who I live with. Arc, I mean.

"You're welcome. I'm happy to do it," replies Nile in an amiable voice, taking no offense.

"Arm!" Someone's voice interrupts us. I turn to the tall guy marching toward me with a scowl.

"My peer mentor," I tell the guy beside me. Nile folds his hands over his chest as a greeting, smiling sheepishly.

"I'm leaving, then."

"Yeah. See you in class. Thank you again for the ride."

"My pleasure."

My new friend drives off with Arc narrowing his eyes after him. We watch the fancy car until it's out of sight, but that's not the end. Arc shoots a series of questions at me immediately.

"Who is that?"

"My new friend."

"How did you meet?"

"In a mandatory class."

"What's his name?"

"Are you my dad or what?"

"Arm, that's not funny." I know. His expression sends me shivers.

"His name is Nile. He's an economics student. We met in class and became friends."

“Did you go to the café with him?”

“Yeah. Pipo and Sand were there as well. Nile’s friends also went with us. We almost took up the whole place.”

“Stay away from him.”

“Why?” I ask, confused.

“Didn’t you see the way he looked at you? I don’t trust him.”

“Nile is very nice.”

“I know. He’s nice and has a thing for you. Keep your distance from him.”

“You’re too paranoid. He doesn’t have a thing for me.”

“Listen to my warning.”

“And if I don’t?”

“Do you wanna get punished?”

Ooooooh, no, thanks. I’ve cried so many times because of his punishment, yet he keeps threatening me. I would like to fight for justice for myself, but I doubt my sensitive heart would be sympathized with.

I go up to the apartment with the tall guy, who still glares. I don’t know what to do but wrap my arms around him and bury my face in his neck.

“Go away.”

“I love you. Don’t be upset...” I say, tightening my embrace. I want to hug him for a long time to make up for the day.

“Did I say I’m upset?”

“You’re frowning.”

“I’m just not happy that you came here with someone else. It’s fine to have friends, but you should know not everyone befriends you without ulterior motives.” Are there still people who like me romantically? No one would be stupid like Arc.

“I get it now.”

"When you see Nile again, tell him you're not available."

"Not available? I'll just say I'm dating someone."

"Whatever. Just make it clear."

"Okay," I agree. I gaze up at the tall guy and croon, "If you're not upset anymore, hug me back."

"..."

"It hurts when you're quiet like this. Hug me. Huuugggggg."

"You naughty brat..."

Arc holds me despite himself, and I'm satisfied with that.

Arc is always like this, but I know he really loves me.

[The God of Fire]

"Arc, why are your eyes glued to your phone? Go get your food."

"I know."

"You've been weird lately. What's wrong?"

"Someone liked my boyfriend's photo."

"Isn't that normal? Nong Arm is cute and teasing. Who wouldn't like him?"

"This person is not normal." Gritting my teeth, I scroll down and read a comment under the photo over and over. That Nile kid...

I dug into this roughly. He is indeed a second-year economics student. According to the register website, he studies the same subject as Arm. And they've met up several times in the past week, which worries me.

I can tell from his eyes that he has a thing for my boyfriend. How can I not be frustrated?

"How come?" asks my friend in puzzlement. I have no reason to hide my speculation.

"I think he's hitting on Arm."

"What?! Aren't you overthinking it?"

"I met him once at the condo. His eyes and mannerisms gave it all away." I've met plenty of people. Sometimes I can read them. Sometimes I can't. But I can see through this guy. Anyone would. Only my boyfriend is too naive, unable to be onto him.

Arm's innocence may drive people up the wall, especially me, who is possessive of him more than anyone.

Give him a chance if he's not crossing the line. I don't want you to rob Arm of the right to make new friends."

"I always give him the freedom to do anything." I've never had a problem with his old and new friends until this person."

"Calm down. I'll help you check."

"Okay."

"Did you talk to Arm about this?"

"Last week. We've never mentioned it again after that."

"Trust your boyfriend."

"I do, but his foolishness makes me uneasy."

"This is my first time seeing you this depressed. Come on, relax. Everything will be fine." My friend's words are no solace. In the end, I still can't shake it off my head.

Eventually, Nile escalates things by becoming part of Arm's life. He has meals at our department, attends classes with Arm, and hangs out with him everywhere. Later, he even asks Arm to watch him at the basketball court. Arm even brings snacks for him.

Hey, this is getting out of hand.

"Arc, we have to stay late to finish this project to make it to the due date."

"Yeah, sure. Let me call Arm first."

Life as a fourth-year is more complicated due to the increasing number of huge projects. Not to mention the internship next semester. Even though I always return to the apartment to cuddle the brat every night, I can't help but feel worried deep down.

I call the number I remember by heart. Arm picks up in a second.

[Hello, handsome.] What a cheeky brat. How can I not love him?

“Am I your playmate?”

[If not, can I tease you as my peer mentor?]

“You can’t sleep without messing with me, huh? Are you done with your classes?”

[No, I have one more class. Are you done?]

“No. I’ll work on a group project with my friends tonight and probably be home late. I’ll give you a ride and drive back to the apartment. You can be alone, right?”

[P’Arc, I forgot to tell you.]

“What?”

[It’s Friday. Can I go to Bang-on Pochana with my friends?]

“When did that come up?”

[This morning. Can I go?] His voice trails off pitifully. How can I say no? Even so, I’m worried about the smaller guy’s safety.

“With who?”

[My dorm mates. Oh, P’Jet is going, too.]

“He’s free today?”

[I think so.] The Angel Gear Code’s bond remains strong despite Jet having graduated. He often hangs out with Arm and me even after landing a stable job. His love life also progresses well to the point he has planned to propose to Yeepoon once she graduates.

Although I don’t understand the rush, I’m happy for them.

“If P’Jet is going, then okay. Just don’t drink too much.”

[I know, geezer.]

“Or maybe not.”

[Ugh, I’m just kidding. You gave me permission. Thank you.]

“Take care of yourself. Call me when you’re done with your class. I’ll pick you up at the building.”

[Okay. Love you.]

“Yeah...”

[Love you.] I remain silent, nervous every time he says it. [What do you say?]

“Hang up and go to class.”

[Answer me first. Love you.]

“I love you, too.”

Fuck, he successfully forced me to say it. Noticing my friends’ teasing gazes, I don’t know how to act. Hey! Why the fuck are you looking at me? Haven’t you seen someone telling their lovers they love them?!

I curse them in my mind. In reality, I advance to the restroom to hide my embarrassment.

We’ve been working on the project until eight before getting some food and returning to complete it. By the time we’re finished, it’s one in the morning. Assuming the naughty brat has come back and is asleep, I drive to the apartment just to face an unexpected situation.

Arm isn’t back...

Overwhelmed by worry, I call him in an instant. No one picks up even a few moments later, so I grab my car keys and go down to the lobby, all the while attempting to contact him. Finally someone answers, but it’s not my boyfriend.

[Hello?]

“Who is this?” It sounds chaotic on the other end.

[I’m Nile, Arm’s friend. You’re his peer mentor, right?]

Holy fuck. If my mood was water, it’d be boiling hot.

“Where’s Arm?”

[He’s drunk. I’m taking him to my car to drive him to his place.]

“Don’t! Stay there! I’ll pick him up.”

[He's knocked out. I think it's better if I just give him a ride.]

"Did nobody hold him back when he was drinking? Where's P'Jet? Where are Po and Sand?"

[All wasted. The other guys will give them rides.]

"For fuck's sake. Hurry up, then. I'll go to the bar if you take too long."

Admittedly, I'm infuriated. As the fury keeps me uneasy, I wait for the brat in the lobby. Of all people, Arm is with that dude. I pace back and forth for around half an hour. Shortly after, a car pulls over at the front. I walk out and take the liberty of opening the car door to get the drunk guy out.

"Arm, Arm..." He's totally wasted, unconscious.

I gently lift the smaller guy and tighten my arms round him with a storm of emotions.

"I'm sorry for not taking good care of him."

"If I had known you'd be there, I wouldn't have allowed him to go." Guilt flashes on Nile's face. I'm not forgiving him. "Leave."

"I..."

"What?"

"Please, don't be mad at Arm."

"It's our business. None of yours."

"I admit. Those words halt me. I turn my head toward the speaker. "I did like him when we first met. Not in a platonic way."

"I could tell," I say honestly.

"I didn't know Arm had a boyfriend."

"Do you know now?"

"Yeah. Arm said he was dating you. He told me the day after I met you for the first time at this condo."

Those words alleviate my anger to an extent. Damn, I feel significantly better to learn Arm cared about me so much that he told him about our relationship. Nonetheless, it's another topic from getting intoxicated and having the motherfucker Nile driving him home. Two different cases.

"If you knew, why didn't you leave my boyfriend alone."

"I don't have a crush on him anymore."

"You expect me to believe that? If you try to break us up, get the hell away. We love each other more than you might think."

"You're misunderstanding. Arm and I are really just friends. But if you're uncomfortable with this, I'll draw a clear line. I can't just stop talking to him."

"I'll talk to Arm about this first. You can go now."

"Sure."

I spin and carry Arm back inside without waiting for Nile to take off, and we take the elevator up to the apartment. I lay the delicate figure on the bed, remove his clothes, and clean him with a wet towel.

"Hmmmmmm..." Look at him giving me a headache even when he's drunk.

"I'll punish you when you're awake." I threaten, as I carefully change him into more comfortable clothes. The night is long. I lie down and hold him. I can be angry at him again tomorrow.

"Naughty."

"Mmmmm."

"Good night."

I wake up early, unable to sleep. Thinking of a plan to mess with my boyfriend. Failing to figure out a way to make the brat try to make up with me, I prepare breakfast for him first.

At nine, I hear a groan and realize the brat has woken up.

"P'Aaaarc, my head hurts, ugh."

“...” I give no response, playing on my phone at the dining table, letting the boy in the bedroom whine.

“Hey, my head hurts.”

I hear a rustling sound before Arm wobbles out. He presses his face against the doorframe and fixes his pleading gaze to me as if to ask for sympathy. I kind of pity him, to be honest.

“How did I get here last night? I blacked out.”

“Nile gave you a ride.” Arm’s eyes widen upon my answer.

“W...What happened? I’m sorry for getting wasted. Go on and cuss me out,” He says, lunging forward and swinging his arms around me from behind. He buries his face in my back and speaks in a muffled voice.

“Nile and I are just friends.”

“...”

“Say something. Please don’t be mad.” I stand up, freeing myself from the smaller guy’s embrace.

“I’m going out. Microwave your breakfast in the fridge. I made it.”

“You can’t go.” He seizes my arm, pouting like he’s about to cry like a child.

“Don’t be naughty.”

“I’m not. Please listen to me.”

“Listen to what? Is there something you need to explain about?”

“Yeah. At least let me confess.”

“Go ahead.”

“Last night, I...I drank alcohol. P’Jet’s friends ordered this new booze that I’d never tried, and it was so good.” Arm glances up at me for a second and tips his chin back down.” I couldn’t stop drinking it. The music was upbeat and Po and Sand got all excited. We chugged and chugged until we blacked out.”

"Yeah. Take some pills just in case. If you're hungover, there's a drink in the fridge."

"W...Where are you going?"

"To see Copp."

"Why?"

"For a chance of scenery." Arm cries upon hearing that, but he quickly wipes off his tears like nothing has happened. I feel so bad but stay strong. If I don't give him a lesson, he will never learn.

Arm doesn't take good care of himself. I don't mind looking after him, but I'm worried someone will harm the person I love when I'm not there. Had I not called him last night, I wouldn't have known where he was or how he was doing.

"Are you crying?"

"No. I'm just...yawning."

"Does your head still hurt?"

Arm nods and adds, "A little. I need someone to take care of me."

"Go sleep in the room."

"No."

"Arm, quit whining."

"I'm not whining. You're mad at me. I don't want you to go." The dam has broken. Arm no longer suppresses it, tears trickling down his cheeks. At this point, my patience vanishes. How can I stand it? I made my boyfriend cry.

"Go lie down in the room. I'll bring you food." Upon hearing that, the naughty brat wipes his tears and smiles.

"I'll eat at the table. Just don't go."

"Okay. Stop crying?"

"Who's crying? I just yawned several times. In a row. You know?" I'd rather be messed with like this. Seeing I'm not as angry as before, Arm returns to normal, being a pain in the ass.

"Whatever you say. Sit down. I'll bring you breakfast."

"Okay."

I watch the smaller guy eat. We're not talking much since I must keep my composure to remind him I'm still upset. Once my boyfriend is done, he takes a shower and comes back to act cute to me again.

"I washed my hair. Will you blow-dry it for me?"

"Do it yourself. I didn't sleep well last night. I'll go take a nap." I climb onto the bed, lie down in silence, and shut my eyes, trying my best not to look at the smaller guy standing there. I don't want to be soft about this kind of thing. Besides, we haven't talked about Nile having feelings for him.

"Sleep well," Arm whispers. I hear a clattering noise, but the blow drying sound never comes. I slowly open my eyes to look for the smaller guy. He enters the bathroom.

I hope he doesn't go in there to cry.

I have no idea how much time passed. When the smaller guy walks out, I pretend to be asleep. I feel the mattress sink and his arms warmly hold me.

I open my eyes at last to see Arm will make up with me, my heart racing.

"You're not drying your hair?"

"I did it with a towel."

"You'll get sick."

"You were asleep. I didn't want to disturb you."

"Holding me isn't a disturbance?"

"You're mad at me."

"I haven't said that."

"I can tell. I told Nile I was dating you. He said he didn't have a thing for me and that we were just friends."

“Do you know he had a crush on you before finding out you were taken?” Arm presses his lips together tightly, not uttering a word. He knew, yet he still hung out with that dude. Good. “You think you can do anything just because I love you?”

“I...It’s not like that. I don’t have feelings for Nile and I love you a lot. That’s why I thought...we could be friends.”

“If you want to be more than just his friend one day, you’ll dump me?”

“P’Arc..”

“Okay. Got it.”

“I’ve never loved anyone like I love you. Why would I dump you? P’Arc...don’t leave me. I never wish to break up with you. Tell me what you want me to do.”

“Don’t cry.” That’s all I want. It hurts my heart again and again. Sigh.

“I’ll make it up to you.”

“No need to. I’m not mad anymore.”

“I’ll do it. I...I’m good at that.” Arm straddles my waist, shocking me as he’s never done this before. I open my mouth to ask, but he shuts me up with his awkward kiss.

I’ve lost it!

My blood gradually burns. I stay still, allowing my boyfriend to do what he wants despite his clumsiness. This is not our first kiss, but it’s the first time he initiates it and goes this hard.

Arm slides his hand down to my stomach, slips it under my shirt, and caresses my skin, sending me chills.

“Mm.” I’m lost in his sweet kiss, letting his wet tongue explore my mouth and exchanging our saliva before he pulls back.

He locks his glazed, big, round eyes on me sensually. Holy shit, he’s fucking hot. We’ve been together for a long time, so I know how adorable and squeezable he is. Today, however, he’s fucking hot, it’s on another level.

"I...I'll take your clothes off," Arm mumbles, taking off my shirt. Meanwhile, I grit my teeth to hold back from stripping him to enjoy the sight of his fair skin. Calm down...calm the fuck down. I force myself to remain still and just watch him.

Look at Arm's shaking hands. Poor him.

Once done with me, Arm removes his clothes. We're both naked now.

"This is how you're making it up for me? How bold of you," I taunt.

Blushing, Arm buries his face in my chest and begs for sympathy. "Forgive me. I did wrong."

So fucking cuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuute. I can barely hold back. What do I do?

"H...How are you going to make me adore you?" I stutter, my mask slipping. Not to mention my private part shamelessly springing up.

"Stay still, I'll do it...I will."

Arm peels himself from my chest and straddles my thighs before wrapping his trembling hand around my firm part. He moves his hand up and down slowly, torturing the hell out of me.

"Arm," I growl his name, my voice unsteady.

"Does it feel good?"

"..."

"Please tell me."

"Yeah..." How am I supposed to speak on the verge of losing my sanity?

I dig my nails into the bedsheet. Being stimulated to an extent, I grab the brat's butt and squeeze it until every inch of his fair skin reddens.

The softness is satisfying, making me float like it's a dream. I'm back to reality when the warmth disappears. I blink at the boy before me and get startled by the bad idea he's about to carry out.

"Arm, wait. Not now."

My boyfriend tries to put my firm part inside him without loosening himself up first. Hold your fucking horses. If it tears, I'll be the one getting cursed.

I try to lift his hips, but Arm grits his teeth and presses them down. My private part touches his back entrance, and when the tip gets in, he shrieks.

"Ouch, waaaaah."

"Calm down. Arm, get up."

"I can't put it in. Oh, why?" Why the hell would it go in? We haven't had sex for some time, so his back entrance isn't ready for any foreign object to intrude.

"It can't go in, naughty. Hold up." Damn, my boyfriend is too innocent.

"I don't know what to do. Hic."

"Okay. Calm down. Don't cry." I get on top of him instead and pin him on the mattress. I brush the tears off his cheeks and give him a lewd kiss.

I don't want it to be just sex. It's part of our relationship, so I wish to be careful and express my love as well.

I withdraw my lips and run them down each part of his body. His neck, chest, stomach, and inner thighs. I leave kiss marks everywhere.

Arm tenses and moans. I don't know anymore if he's making it up for me or vice versa. But I'm not complaining. Since he's inexperienced, I have to take the lead.

"Does it feel good?" Arm nods. "Don't ever do that again."

"I watched it in a movie."

"What movie?"

"It's from Po and Sand. It...went in so easily." I want to smack myself on the head.

"They were prepared beforehand. You weren't." He tried to imitate porn and ended up crying.

"You have to be carefully prepared. Don't just jump into it." I straighten up, fetch a lubricant gel from the drawer and pour it on my fingers and his back entrance.

“Easy. Bear with it like always.” Obeying, Arm grips my arm with both hands and bites his lip, His eyes flicker as I spread his legs and slowly insert my fingers inside.

“Hic.”

“Well done, good boy.” Although this is not our first time, I’m used to comforting him with words. It takes time and patience for the preparations. Beads of sweat cover my skin, including my back. I position myself between his fair legs and stroke his stomach to relax him.

“Let me get a condom real quick.”

“O...Okay.”

I reach into the drawer again and grab a condom. This time I don’t rip the wrap with my mouth, now knowing it’s not cool, I’ll unwrap it normally.

I put the condom on, and I’m ready for the battle.

I don’t know who is making up to who, but I can’t take it anymore. He seduced me.

“Take a deep breath. Relax yourself the way you’ve always done.”

“I forgot now.”

“You forgot something like this?” I , slowly pushing it in, slowly filling the air inside. Halfway in and Arm tenses up. His back entrance encloses around me, making me stuck there.

“Naughty boy, you actually forgot it?”

“Ek! I...I don’t know...Waaaah, I don’t know what to do.”

Every time is like the first time for him. I lean down and kiss his lips again, fondling his body to ease him up with our bodies connecting. Soon, I can slide all the way in.

Panting, Arm flutters his eyelids at me and cracks a distorted smile.

“What’s with that face?” I ask, ruffling his soft hair.

“P’Arc, am I good at this?”

“Yes.” The brat is proud despite the rough start. Damn!

I’m fucking proud to have a boyfriend who’s attentive in bed. He must genuinely be terrified that I would dump him, though I have never thought of that.

“Okay. Can I continue?”

“Mm.”

“Rest assured. It won’t hurt like before.”

The first time was tough, but later I learned how to make it as little painful as possible so we could enjoy it together. I slowly pull my firm part out and struggle to put it back in.

Arm is burning inside like a boiling pot. His back entrance clenches so hard that I’m on the verge of exploding many times. I have a hard time inching in despite the lubricant gel helping it all go smoothly.

“Hug me”

“You’re so clingy.” I lower to hold the delicate figure and move my hips rhythmically. The sound of our flesh hitting echoes across the room along with the sweet moans from the guy below me.

“Ah...hm...uh...”

Arm shakes his head and digs his nails into my back, spreading his legs more to take in the thrusts and arousal.

The movements became smoother, gradually awakening my primal instinct as I quicken the pace. Faster, harder, and also so deep that there is barely any gap between us.

The smaller guy twitches over and over, his body bouncing in time with the thrusts. His eyes brimming with tears, he grits his teeth and welcomes my pounding. Our sweat and scents envelop us, causing such dizziness that one of us might break.

“You’re in...ah...P’Arc...”

I thrust repeatedly. Even though I’ve reminded myself to be gentle, I can’t hold back any longer.

“P’Arc...you’re...you’re in...too deep. Waaah.”

“Not good?”

“No, hic.”

“But I like it. Should I just...glue us together so we’re stuck with each other until our last day.” Arm presses his face into the pillow, not answering, letting out a soft moan as he accepts all of my feelings.

I caress his stomach and hold his private part with the other hand before moving in time with the movements of my hips. I have no idea how much time has passed, but we’re getting there.

“Ready, good boy?”

“H...Hic, yes.”

His moan resounds. The world turns white for a second before I snap back, yank the condom off, and shoot the white liquid out.

His quick panting is heavy and content at the same time. I embrace the guy under me and collapse on the mattress with him helplessly, waiting for...my private part to grow hard again.

And, of course, my first question is...

“You want to make it up to me?” Arm opens his eyes and looks at me as if processing it, then nods with blushing cheeks. He’s so squeezable. I can barely stand it and wish to pound him one more time, but it’s not my job this time.

“There’s one thing you can do. Are you willing to do it?”

“Y...Yeah. But...you have to stop being mad at me.”

“Mm.”

How can I be mad at him? I’m about to teach my boyfriend to be on top.

Ooooooooooh, my ultimate wish is to be ridden by my boyfriend. Staring at his aroused and shy expression, I know my mind will be fucking blown.

“W...What do I have to do to make it up to you?”

“Just do as I say.”

After wearing another condom, I lift him up and sit up with the brat straddling my hips like before. It won't be a failure this time with my guidance.

"Hold it, good boy." I wrap Arm's palm around my private part.

"Like this?"

Is he holding or squeezing? My dick isn't a mango.

"Too hard. Just hold it lightly." Fuck, I almost climaxed. It'd be humiliating to ejaculate before my boyfriend does.

"W...What next?"

"Slowly lower your hips." I feel bad seeing him squat over me. I have to help him position it, or it will miss the aim.

"Will it hurt like before?"

"No. Trust me and it won't hurt. Slowly, good boy. Easy." I grab his hips firmly and wait until he lowers his body as told. His back entrance touches my firm part and here comes the tricky part: the penetration. I help him by shoving it up inside.

GASP!!

Arm spasms, getting chills, and then..

"Don't cry."

"Waaaa, P'Arc, it's tight. So tight. Ahhhh."

"It went in...it's in, good boy. Hold on. Hang in there a bit more." We couple work together. I stay patient in fear of hurting him, helping him press his hips down.

Every inch of his body is fucking alluring in my eyes, full of bite and kiss marks. His skin is so red that I want to tease him even more. My heart is racing, about to leap out of my chest.

His legs quiver like crazy, simultaneously pitiful and adorable. We stop when I'm halfway in, and I slide my hands from my hips to his butt. I part those cheeks slightly and speak in a hoarse voice.

"Lower."

"I...I can't."

"I went deeper earlier. Hang in there."

Arm shakes violently, his eyes darting around in confusion. It takes him some time to collect himself and press his hips all the way down his gritted teeth.

"Ahh!!" We're fully connected. "It's deeper than ever. P...P'Arc, don't move..."

"You move, then."

"I don't know how."

"Wrap your arms around my neck." I place his arms on my shoulders and set his head on my chest to reduce his embarrassment. I do my part by elevating his butt so it's more comfortable.

"Better?"

"Slowly." His back passage rubs my stiff part, driving me nuts.

We're attempting to do our best. Despite the clumsiness, it's worth it. When my tip hits this particular part inside of him, the smaller guy, stimulated, moans indecipherably. I'm deep and hot.

This may be awkward, but it will be my best memory.

Arm moves up and down in time with me for a while. Noticing he's at his limit, I push him down and finish it off.

The naughty brat cries out endlessly as we reach the climax together. I pull out, remove the condom and release my desire. Our bodies are all dirty. At this moment, neither of us are willing to get up and get cleaned up. We're lying there in each other's arms.

"Thank you so much. Well done today."

I comfort the guy resting on my chest, kiss his forehead and tighten my embrace.

"Are you still mad at me?"

His voice is pitifully muffled.

Having enough fun, I confess. "I actually wasn't mad at you. I just wanted to mess with you."

"Huh? You were messing with me? Why? Why so mean?"

"You didn't take good care of yourself. Who told you to get wasted like that? Who told you to invite Nile without telling me? I couldn't even bring myself to be mad because it's you. Don't ever do that again."

"I won't, I've learned my lesson."

"About me pretending to be mad or our sex?"

"All of that, boohoo..."

"You'll be addicted to it."

"No more. You messed with me. You did! You did!"

"It wasn't my fault. You made me want to do it."

I console the brat until we both fall asleep.

We did it in the middle of the day. I won't be able to get anything done. But cuddling all day sounds like a better idea. Sigh.

Nile's appearance got me thinking.

Since I started dating Arm, we haven't officially announced our relationship. People may assume from what they see or find out from word of mouth, but...many still understand that I'm just his peer mentor.

That's why some might think they can hit on my boyfriend, and it gives me a headache from those who try to pursue him. Some might just wish to be friends, and some might hope for something more. Despite Arm's sudden rejection, I have concluded to take matters into my own hands.

I spend the rest of the day selecting my photo with Arm. The most handsome and best one to post.

I'm not the type to do something like this, but someone will always be the exception to me.

Anol Paraminphisan

Arm and I have been dating for a while. I'm not just his peer mentor. I'm his boyfriend.

To those who want to get to know Arm, it's okay to be friends with him. But if you wish to be more than that, I'll kick your ass.

– END –

Special 4

Someone Said You were Cheating on Me But Someone Told Me You Were the One Cheating On Me

[Po Knows, the World Knows]

– Nosy Space –

Sannnnnd

Hey, did you hear the news? Everyone is talking about it.

PipoLovindDolls

About stealing dog food?

I can't believe they found it

Sannnnnd

Bastard, this is serious

Arm and P'Arc broke up. Did you know?

PipoLovindDolls

I did.

But I doubt it.

Sannnnnd

I doubted at first. But let me ask you something.

Have you seen Arm and our idol hanging out lately?

PipoLovindDolls

Not really

But those two have never been joined at the hip

Sannnnnd

They haven't spent time together for an entire week.

Our friend never even mentioned P'Arc.

PipoLovindDolls

I see. That makes sense.

Arm has been staying at his own house, right?

I don't know if he's moved back to Arc's apartment, yet.

Sannnnnd

Right! This is bad!

He's hurt but wouldn't tell us. It must be uncomfortable.

PipoLovindDolls

Wait, what if they didn't break up? It's just a rumor, right?

Sannnnnd

That's why I'm texting you

Go find out

PipoLovindDolls

Can't you just call Arm?

Sannnnnd

He didn't pick up

PipoLovindDolls

See you at the department tomorrow. Let's ask him directly.

Sannnnnd

Deal. I'll go look for more information

It's Sunday. My life is simple: I'm filing my nails in my room. I might play claw machines if I get lonely because all my friends are busy. Sand is with his girlfriends as weekends are meant to be spent with her and be their romantic times. Arm used to be the same, but there has been a rumor suspiciously getting out of hand.

I once believed it was just a rumor to spice things up in the department since Sand and I, Arm's close friends, weren't even aware of it. But now, boom!!

It's escalating.

I try my best to suppress my nosiness. Since Sand has said Arm didn't pick up his call, I use my free time to write out the possibilities of this rumor.

1. Arm and Arc didn't spend time together at all for the past week.
2. Arm has been hanging out with us a lot lately and never mentioned his boyfriend
3. The unreliable rumor was spread, yet no one has come out to deny it since the middle of last week.
4. Arm didn't pick up Sand's call.
5. They don't live together at Arc's apartment anymore. Maybe they do, but I'm not sure.

I memorize these facts. Still, I have multiple more missions to secretly discover the truth about one of my friends. This feels like Mission Impossible.

First, I check all my friend's social media accounts. He texted me back this morning on LINE, so that's crossed out. Let's take a look at Instagram. Wait!

Arm posted a black-and-white photo hours ago!!

6. Heartbroken people tend to post black-and-white photos to express their grief.

Arm is behaving like that. Not to mention his saddening emotionless face.

Gosh! This is horrible. My heart thumps in apprehension. I don't want my friend to break up with my idol, even though I've been acting like an overprotective fan. I must find out more.

Facebook.

Fuck!

Another strong piece of evidence.

'I hate the rain pouring down. It hurts whenever I look at it,'

7. A sad status. Definitely heartbroken person material.

I gradually collect evidence to support my speculation one by one until I'm certain. This Ethan Hunt will show you the truth himself. Next is the Superior Prince's social media accounts.

I'm one of the few lucky people permitted to be my idol's friend on social media. As his boyfriend's friend, I have access to further information. Regardless of that, my privilege is useless because Arc hardly posts or goes active online. It's a failure.

At night, I can't sleep. I keep thinking about someone else's business until I fall asleep at dawn and even dream about it. I wake up at seven, shower, and head to the university, where Sand Bond 007 is waiting.

"Hey, where's Arm?" I ask right away.

"I called this morning. He's skipping today."

"Oh, why?"

"He said he was sick. His voice was so hoarse like he'd been crying."

"Whoa! Seriously?"

"Should we video-call him?" Sand suggests.

"IS it a good idea?" I'm actually so ready in my mind. Arm must be proud of my nosiness.

"What do you say?"

“Let’s do it. I’m worried about him.” That’s the truth, though there’s a hint of nosiness in my worrying.

I call my friend with my camera on, dying to talk to him. The screen then shows a pale face with terrifyingly swollen eyes. Whoaaa, this is terrible. My heart sinks. He’s evidently hurt.

“Arm, are you okay?”

[Yeah. No...cough, cough. I’m a bit sick.] His tongue almost falls out when he coughs. A bit sick?

“Did you see a doctor?”

[No. I’ll be fine. Tell the professors for me. I’ll...hand in an absence letter later.]

“Hey, no worries. Who are you with right now?”

[I’m alone.]

“Where’s P’Arc?”

At the mention of my idol, his swollen eyes are brimming with tears. Oh, my goodness! It seems my speculation is correct. Even so, I’m unsure how to comfort him without reopening his wounds.

“It’s alright. You don’t have to say anything. Have you eaten?”

[Yeah, but...]

“Arm, it’s all right. What do you want to eat? I’ll stop by.”

[Don’t come.] Arm says in a quivering voice.

“I’m worried. Can you see Sand? He’s worried, too.” I shift the camera to the guy beside me so Arm can see. At least he’ll be reassured that he’s not alone.

“Get some rest. I’ll keep checking on you. Tell us if you need anything.”

[Thanks, guys. You’re very nice to me.]

“You’re our best friend.”

[You too. See you later.]

“Yeah.” Arm hangs up. Our hearts plummet as we exchange an understanding glance. The puzzle pieces that I’ve been collecting since yesterday are put together. Everything is clear in my mind.

We can’t allow things to become this way. Arm’s relationship with the Superior Prince must continue. I believe there are good enough reasons to keep them going, no matter what it takes!

“Sand, let’s meet with P’Copp and the other guys.”

“I agree. At least if they’re aware of this problem, we can figure out a solution together.”

“Let’s see them after the afternoon class.”

“Okay!”

When it comes to our friend’s love life, we’ll fight to maintain it.

[The Copp: A Worried Leader of the Nosy Gang]

– Who started the rumor? --

CallmeiamPond

Call Arc now

There’s a rumor he broke up with Arm

Is it true?

Bbloom

I heard.

What’s going on?

CoppKubbbb

I haven’t called him

It’s the weekend.

But when the rumor was started,

He didn’t say anything

Bbloom

I'm worried

He loves this one a lot

CallmeiamPond

Maybe it's not true

As friends, we'd better ask him quickly

CoppKubbbb

Who's going to call him?

CallmeiamPond

You. You are the nosiest, Copp

CoppKubbbb

Me again? We have no evidence

Who will take responsibility if he lashes out on me?

He'll say I'm cursing their relationship to fail

Bbloom

I'm worried

He loves this one a lot

CoppKubbbb

Okay, I'll call him

CallmeiamPond

Keep us posted

I'm ready to be there whenever Arc needs me.

This group chat has specifically been created to discuss our dear friend's relationship with his boyfriend. We rarely meddle in each other's personal lives, but the matters concerning Arm unnerves me.

Arc loves him dearly. When I heard the rumor, I couldn't help feeling shaken up.

A fight wouldn't be worrying since we could help them make up. But if they broke up as rumored, that would be a problem.

Arc is a passionate lover, but once his love for someone vanishes, he's ready to walk away.

I've been through all the dramas in his life, including when he broke up with the girl he dated for almost a year, but it's different from his relationship with Arm. My friend's feelings for his peer mentee are much more profound. They get along well and are willing to adjust to each other. In addition, given how he's head over heels for his boyfriend, the possibility of breaking up is low.

Alright. After all these speculations, my imaginative time is over. I bring myself back to reality by contacting my dear friend. He picks up, of course, though he sure took his time.

[Hey.] Daaaaaamn, what a fucking raspy voice.

"Arc, where are you?"

[At my apartment.]

"What are you doing?"

[Sleeping.] At ten? No waaaay. Everything is suspiciously strange. The rumor somehow begins to make sense, to my unease. I hope it's not what I think, yet I can't ask him directly. Let's feel him out.

"What about Arm? Where is he?"

[Why are you asking about him? What's the matter?]

"Nothing. Just worried."

[I'll go back to sleep.]

"Sure. Sweet dreams," I say. Before he hangs up, I add "Arc."

[Hmm...?]

"I'm your friend. You can talk to me about anything."

[Yeah. Thanks a lot. I'll talk to you when I'm ready.]

Judging by the last sentence, something must have happeeeeeeened.

Arc must have a problem. Considering his raspy voice and attempt to end the conversation quickly, it becomes clear. I text the guys right away and fill them in on everything. At least they'll know how to act when seeing Arc tomorrow.

I'm not good at comforting people, but I'm always ready if my friends need help.

I head to the university like usual in the morning, only to face an unexpected turn of events.

Arc isn't here!

With my restless heart being more uneasy, we agree to video-call him.

That bastard doesn't answer at first, but we keep trying. If he still ignores us, we'll go to his apartment and save him in case he decides to self-exit. After the millionth attempt, fortunately, Arc picks up the call.

[What?]

"Whoooooa, bro." He looked drained, unwell, lips chapped, lying on his bed in a poor state. I can't glimpse his surroundings with his face taking up the whole screen, but he's obviously unwell.

"Are you sick?"

[Yeah, I'm taking a day off.] Pond and Bloom, shocked by their sight, are in complete silence.

"It's okay. I'll tell the professors for you. Do you need anything? Did you see a doctor?"

[No.]

"You should go. Can you, though? I can give you a ride."

[No, thanks. I just need to rest.]

"What about Arm? He can take care of you." I lead him to what has been bugging me. The question however makes my dear friend's face cloud.

[He can't take care of me.]

How saaaaaaad. Arc is in deep pain. I assume something must've happened. And affected their relationship. It saddens me. Although I feel sorry for my friend, I don't know how to comfort him.

Arc has always been strong and kept everything to himself. But when it comes to Arm, I know the pain hurts him physically as well. This is the first time I've witnessed him in such a state.

"Tell me if you need anything. I'm your friend, Arc."

[Yeah, I know.]

"I love you, man."

[You're annoying. Bye. I'm going back to sleep.]

"Sure, bro. Sure."

My heart is still numb, I feel awful and scared simultaneously. I suppose the other guys feel the same. It hurts to see two crazy-in-love people ending their relationship. Unacceptable.

"I'll talk to Arm about this. At least he should know how poorly our friend is taking this matter."

"I agree."

"Hey! Check his schedule on the website. I'll wait for him at the building."

Friends are supposed to care about each other.

And this friend will help you get through everything unscathed.

[Po Knows, the World Knows]

"Po, Sand, the seniors are looking for you." Yo tells us briefly. Not asking who they are, we walk out of the room. The three seniors are waiting for us outside.

Something must've transpired, given they're Arc's friends. I assume they're here to talk about the same thing that has been eating at us.

"Is the class over?"

"In ten minutes."

“Okay. We’ll wait downstairs. We need to talk,” says Copp in a stern voice.

“Same here.”

I can’t wait for the professor to dismiss the class. Why are ten minutes so long like time isn’t moving at all? The professor assigns an assignment to us before the class ends, and I keep fidgeting in my seat with my backpack already packed. Sand is the same, knowing something more important awaits us outside.

“Class dismissed.”

At that second, Sand and I spring up, soar down the steps, and head to the meeting place in a flash. Copp and the guys are waiting for us. Spotting us, they gesture to us to sit and get to the point.

“Your friend dumped my friend!”

BOOM!

Nonsenseeeee. Why would Arm dump Arc when he loves him so much? Despite the occasional fights, I’m a hundred percent sure my friend couldn’t have initiated the breakup.

“No way. Your friend dumped my friend.”

Slightly baffled, the seniors oppose.

“Bullshit. You haven’t seen how miserable Arc is, have you?”

“What about you? Arm’s eyes were swollen from crying. How could it happen if not because of P’Arc breaking up with him? Don’t forget that a popular and hot guy like P’Arc wouldn’t have a problem dumping my friend!”

“Wow, how could you say that? Your friend broke my friend’s heart. Arc is loyal to Arm. He never has eyes for others.”

“ ... ”

“Be honest. Your friend is cheating on our friend, isn’t he?”

“The Superior Prince is the cheater! I heard a lot of girls added him on LINE.”

“Don’t change the subject,” the seniors press on. As Arm’s friend, I must do my best to protect him despite my strong faith in the Superior Prince. At this moment, the number-one person Sand and I will defend is Arm.

“We’re not.”

“Let me ask you something. What’s with that Nile guy?”

“How do you know about him?” I ask, flustered. Nile told me he had a crush on Arm, but that was a while ago. It’s clear that their relationship will never develop into anything more than a platonic one.

More importantly, Arm has nooooo feelings for Nile. Arc is the only one he loves!

“We just know. Are you still going to insist your friend isn’t cheating on my friend?”

“He isn’t. Arm and Nile are friends. Look at my mouth closely. They...are...friends.”

“Ugh, you liar!”

“...”

“You should’ve seen Arc this morning. That was the face of a heartbroken guy. It hurts when I see him like that. Call Arm here to clear things up. Where is he?”

“He’s hurt so bad and not ready to see anyone. You call Arc here.”

“My friend is hurt, too.”

“My friend is more hurt.”

“How do you know? You’ve never seen Arc’s weak side, huh?”

The war of words continues with no sign of ending anytime soon.

We’ve been keeping everything to ourselves and not others. If it’s going to end, it’d better end at this table with justice served for Arm.

“I don’t know why they broke up, but I hope they get back together, so you guys must cooperate with us. Tell us the truth. Is Arm cheating on my friend?”

“This again? Are you not going to drop that?”

I would have punched Copp had I not appreciated our good relationship all this time.

"No. You two haven't told us the truth."

"You're the one that should speak the truth. P'Arc is cheating on Arm. Didn't you see my friend's sad status and black-and-white photo to mourn love?"

"Ridiculous. Should I screenshot my friend's face and send it to you to show you how miserable Arc is?"

"Sure. You can compare it to a screenshot of Arm's swollen eyes. We'll see who's hurt more."

"Is that a challenge?"

"Yeah. Come on! Bring it on!!"

"Don't think we'll be scared."

"No. I can accept the truth."

One of us will be crushed today.

[The Start of It All]

"Waaaaaaah..."

"Stop crying. Your eyes are swollen."

"Oh, no. We shouldn't have done that. I hate the rain. I hate you, too."

"Okay. You can hate me for today, but you have to let me hug you."

"You were rough."

"I'm sorry, okay?"

"I had to skip classes. Hic."

"I'm no different from you."

Getting playful, I asked Arm yesterday to have sex with me on the balcony. The naughty brat protested at first, but then he got quite excited. Enjoying it, we kept doing it there.

Who would've expected the rain? Since I was having fun with my boyfriend, I wasn't in the mood to get back inside. We took the risk and had sex from seven to nine, all soaked and exhausted on the balcony.

We returned inside trembling. Arm sneezed, and I coughed. We took a warm shower, covered ourselves in a thick blanket, and embraced each other, yet it didn't help. We both took two paracetamol each. Later at ten my friends video-called me.

They checked on me in worry, though it wasn't the best time. We chatted for a few moments before I hung up in exhaustion. My hips were aching down to my toes from the rough thrusts. If it affected me this awfully, then Arm suffered more.

His eyes were swollen like limes from crying and the rain. It was wonderful at first but our bodies slowly succumbed to the weather and I wished to bring my boyfriend back inside, pitying him. However, the brat braved up and said he liked it like that. Oh! Fine with me. We went all out and ended up in this state.

"Where does it hurt?" I whisper in his ear.

Arm replies in a muffled voice "Everywhere."

"We won't do it on the balcony anymore, okay? Let's do it somewhere else."

"I'll never indulge you again. Never ever."

He says that every time and then nods along whenever I decide to be extreme.

Daaaaamn, what a brat. He keeps making me fall for him.

And then what? The Superior Prince and his bratty boyfriend have a fever.

We always take care of each other when one of us is sick. But now, we're both weak and taking turns feeding each other. I'll be fine since my immunity is strong from all the exercises. I usually recover quickly. I'm more worried about Arm because I might need to take him to the hospital if his condition worsens.

"My friends called," says the smaller guy, his voice hoarse, his eyes pitifully brimming with tears.

"Yeah? What did they say?"

"They were worried, but I didn't want to say much. I was embarrassed...." You weren't embarrassed at all last night. Why now?

"Tell them you'll skip today."

"I did."

"Good. Your face and nose get so red when you're sick. I'll give you a wet towel treatment."

"You're sick, too."

"It's okay. I'm fine." My body screams otherwise, though. "Skip tomorrow if you don't feel better. I'll download the lecture slides and teach you what you don't understand."

"Are you a professor? Why are you so smart?"

"I can be anything for you."

"Yesterday...about what you did, don't tell anyone," Arm mumbles in a muffled voice, cracking me up.

"Okay."

"Just tell your friends we got caught in the rain and had a fever."

"Yeah, okay." I pat his head. "Hungry?"

"No. I want to cuddle. Can we cuddle?"

"So whiny."

But no matter how whiny he is, I can never reject the feelings in my heart.

Today is another happy day. Even though we're both sick, it's okay. Just waking up with the knowledge that this person is in my life is enough, I want nothing else.

Oh, wait...

Are my friends still worried?

I should at least call them to tell them I'm feeling better now.

– END –

Extra Special (Last Chapter)

Love Forming within the Gear Code

Name: Jet

Education: Graduate in Mechanical Engineering

Status: In a relationship

Position: Engineering Prince, Campus Prince

Love Story in the Gear Code: I met her in her first year, my peer mentee. She looked like a silly puppy and was kind of cute, so I hit on her. That was it.

Name: Arc

Education: Fourth-year student of Civil Engineering

Status: Unclear. Still discussing it with my boyfriend.

Position: Superior Prince

Love Story in the Gear Code: I hit a car with him in my passenger seat and got worried upon seeing that state, I realized later that it meant I cared about him, then I got possessive of him, then I couldn't take it and asked him to be my boyfriend.

Name: Yeepoon

Education: Third-year Environmental Engineering student

Status: In a cute relationship with the Campus Prince

Position: Engineering Princess

Love Story in the Gear Code: He hit on me. He was handsome, so...I decided to date him.

Name: Arm

Education: Second-year Electrical Engineering student

Status: Submissive

Position: Superior Prince's boyfriend

Love Story in the Gear Code: I don't know. He suddenly confessed, then I fell in love, then we had sex (I've been contacted to be an inhaler's presenter.).

Name: Yotha

Education: First-year Civil Engineering student

Status: Single

Position: –

Love Story in the Gear Code: Ah, how am I supposed to tell my love story without anyone to hit on? I can't do it right now. I'll tell you later when there's someone for me

– END OF BOOK –